

The Environmental Advisory Council (EAC) follows up with the Parking Authority and gets good news

The Bethlehem Gadfly Climate Action Plan, Environment, Environmental Advisory Council, Parking,
Serious Issues September 27, 2019

(The latest in a series of posts relating to the environment, Bethlehem's Climate Action Plan, and Bethlehem's Environmental Advisory Council)

Lynn Rothman chairs the Environmental Advisory Council (EAC).

9/25/19 Bethlehem Parking Authority

Good afternoon. My name is Lynn Rothman, speaking on behalf of the Bethlehem EAC.

I'm here today so that we can both put faces to the names in the [EAC's July letter to you](#). As you may know, the City of Bethlehem is embarking on a Climate Action Plan with the goal of reducing our ghg emissions for the health, well-being and sustainability of ourselves and future generations.

To help our City achieve this goal, we entreat the BPA to put solar panels on the proposed

Polk Street Garage, as well as existing and future garages. As shown in the photographs of other garages that were included in our letter, solar panels do not appear to inhibit the

available parking area.

The Authority could purchase solar panels, and through energy savings, recoup the initial investment over a period of years, thereafter reducing or eliminating the cost of electricity.

The EAC also wants to be sure you are aware of financing options for solar systems that

require no upfront costs.

A Power Purchase Agreement, or PPA, requires no upfront costs and entails having a solar provider own and maintain your solar system. The PPA provider may qualify for tax credits and accelerated depreciation. Under this scenario the Authority would agree to purchase electricity from the provider for 20 yrs. During that time the provider is responsible for all maintenance. After 20 yrs. the Parking Authority would have the option to continue or to purchase the solar system. Depending upon the size of the system, the price the PA would pay should be close to the going rate for electricity.

Even better, you could apply any excess power generated at the Polk Street garage to other garages within 2 miles. This is called virtual net metering.

Detailed information is available from solar providers that work with financial institutions.

Another possible option would be Commercially Assessed Clean Energy or C-PACE. No

upfront cost is required, rather a loan for the solar system would be tied to the property.

It's unclear whether the Parking Authority would qualify for C-PACE, but you can find out by speaking with a representative from the Sustainable Energy Fund. SEF will be

overseeing the C-PACE program and is currently working with Northampton County on a

cooperative agreement.

As stated in our letter, we also recommend that new structures use a sustainable design

and LED lighting. We advise that trees be planted as densely as possible on the property to sequester carbon, help clean the air, provide cooling and aesthetically enhance the entire development.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Lynn hadn't heard anything after the July letter to the BPA. She found that the letter had somehow gone astray, but the BPA exec director told her, "The BPA is working towards sustainability. 100% of the BPA facilities should have LED lighting by next yr. At least 90% of facilities are currently equipped with LED lighting. BPA has a consultant looking at solar comprehensively for all garages as opposed to a singular garage. EV charging stations are also prominent."

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