



Environment Committee Recommends Solar Panels for Somerset

At the January 6, 2022 Environment Committee Meeting, the Committee unanimously voted to recommend that the Town Council consider installing solar panels on its public spaces. Specifically, there are two areas to be considered: the roof of the pool house and the grass area between the tennis courts and Cumberland Avenue. The impetus for making this recommendation is motivated by the following considerations.

The Town of Somerset is committed to reducing its carbon footprint, as evidenced by several decisions and actions in 2021 (see <https://townofsomerset.com/2360/Environment>). The Town adopted a resolution declaring a Climate Emergency, signed a Sierra Club pledge with a goal for our Town to move to 100% clean, renewable energy, and endorsed the Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty. All of these actions reflect Somerset's commitment to reducing its carbon footprint.

Using solar panels as a renewable energy source is an excellent way to reduce the use of fossil fuels. Presently, we use approximately 190k KWH of electricity annually, which includes street lighting, the Town Hall, and the Town Pool. Installing solar panels would substantially reduce our Town's electricity bill and would also entitle the Town to earn valuable Solar Renewable Energy Credits (SRECs), which are like stock that can be sold. A SREC unit is valued at \$400 in the District of Columbia (DC) and \$80 in Maryland. To make this concrete, a Somerset home with solar panels typically pays \$0 in electricity fees and receives \$900/month if its SRECs are a part of the DC grid.

What might this mean for the Town of Somerset? The DC electrical grid includes Dorset Avenue and the area of Somerset south of Dorset Avenue. The Town could earn SRECs from the energy contributed by Town solar panels



to either the DC or the Maryland grid. Solar panels on the roof of the pool house would be a part of the DC grid, and the Town could thus benefit from DC's valuable SRECS. Solar panels on the north side of the tennis courts (where they would not be visible to tennis players or residents of Cumberland Avenue) might contribute to either the DC or Maryland grid. One option would be to connect the solar panels via a cable to our town meter on Wisconsin Avenue, just north of Dorset Avenue, which apparently is a part of the DC grid. If such a cable weren't feasible, then this project would connect to the Maryland grid via the meter at the Town Hall.

The Environment Committee has already had preliminary conversations with solar panel contractors and the Montgomery County Planning Department about the feasibility of this project and how the process might go forward. The Environment Committee is committed to Somerset's becoming a carbon-neutral town and we look forward to working with the Town Manager to assess the financial feasibility of this project.

If you have ideas on how our town can become more sustainable and carbon free, please reach out to us at: [**tos.environmentcommittee@gmail.com**](mailto:tos.environmentcommittee@gmail.com).