



MEMBER SPOTLIGHT



MASSACHUSETTS MUNICIPAL WHOLESALE ELECTRIC COMPANY

West Boylston launches state's largest municipal utility solar project

WEST BOYLSTON, Mass. – The largest municipal utility solar project in Massachusetts started operation in November 2010, delivering clean, renewable electricity to the approximate 3,400 customers of the West Boylston Municipal Lighting Plant (WBMLP).

West Boylston's 369.6-kilowatt solar photovoltaic energy project, comprised of 1,760 solar panels installed on town property, is expected to produce more than 450,000 kilowatt hours of electricity a year, enough to power 75 typical homes, according to WBMLP General Manager H. Bradford White, Jr.

"This project is a community initiative to achieve environmental objectives and reduce our dependence on foreign oil," White said. "At the same time, it brings diversity to our power supply that helps protect customers from volatile fossil fuel prices," he said.

White said West Boylston's consumer-owned utility started working with town officials more than two years ago in search of a way to reduce the town's carbon footprint. The utility considered installing wind turbines at the site but settled on a solar project after reviewing wind speed data.



The 1,760-panel West Boylston Municipal Lighting Plant solar project entered commercial operation in November 2010.

"Use of the site as a solar resource makes more energy and economic sense for our customers," White said. "We have a long-term resource at a fixed price and we're capturing the environmental and other benefits of renewable energy as well," he said.

The approximate \$2 million project won a \$1.17 million allocation of federal Clean Renewable Energy Bonds to assist with financing. In addition to revenue from the sale of electricity, the project will receive revenue from the sale of Solar Renewable Energy Certificates (SRECs), as allowed under a state program to encourage solar development. Under the program, new solar projects receive tradable credits (SRECs) based upon the amount of energy the projects produce.

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“The sale of SRECs will significantly reduce the cost of this project for West Boylston consumers,” White said.

WBMLP and MMWEC created a municipal lighting plant cooperative to facilitate development and financing for the project, which is located at the intersection of Paul X. Tivnan Road and Shrewsbury Street in West Boylston.

WBMLP is celebrating its 100th anniversary this year. Renewable energy development is part of the utility’s strategy to keep moving forward while adhering to the traditional values of public power, including local ownership and control, reliable service and non-profit operations. WBMLP also is part owner of a 15-megawatt wind project on Brodie Mountain in Western Massachusetts that is scheduled to start operation early next year.

“We have great respect for the tradition, value and responsibility that come with public ownership and control of the town’s electric utility,” White said. “Part of that responsibility is finding innovative solutions to the challenges posed by greener energy policies, wholesale power market reforms and increased financial risks,” he said.

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