

# Westminster joins smart energy program

By Brett Lake Times Staff Writer | Posted: Monday, August 26, 2013 9:15 pm

The Westminster Mayor and Common Council approved two resolutions Monday that will make the city a member of the Maryland Energy Administration's Smart Energy Communities Program.

As part of the program, the city will get a \$68,000 grant and attempt to reduce electricity consumption and utilize renewable energy in government buildings.

The city will attempt to reduce electricity generation in government buildings by having 20 percent of the buildings' electricity demand come from distributed, renewable energy, according to Resolution 13-07 — Renewable Energy Policy.

The city aims to meet the reduction goal by 2022, according to the resolution.

Renewable energy is generated from sources including solar, wind, geothermal and waste-to-energy facilities.

The city has not yet decided what to use the \$68,000 grant on, though City Administrator Marge Wolf said Monday it could go toward a new heating system in the Westminster Police Department, but that will be evaluated.

Wolf said the city already has several projects lined up in the city's Capital Improvement Projects Plan including solar energy and geothermal projects.

The program will not impact city residents, Wolf said.

The city will also attempt to reduce electricity consumption in government buildings by 15 percent in a five-year period, according to Resolution 13-08 — Energy Efficiency Policy.

A baseline year no earlier than 2009 must be selected by the city to track electricity consumption.

"We're looking very carefully and going to analyze what that starting point should be," Wolf told the council.

Under the program, the city will develop and implement Renewable Energy Action and Energy Reduction plans, which will be used to map out how the city will reach its goals, according to the resolutions.

The city will report its electricity consumption and renewable generation capacity annually to the Maryland Energy Administration using a state-approved energy management program, according to the resolutions.

During the discussion, Councilman Paul Whitson asked if there would be any penalty against the city if the goals are not met.

Wolf said the city is not at risk for any penalties.

“We’ll give it our best efforts,” Wolf said. “We actually feel we can meet this without any trouble.”