

The Green Connection

Next Green Committee Meeting

Tuesday, July 14th

8:00 am

Green Committee Meeting

75 Calhoun Street Third Floor Meeting Room

([CARTA Route 201](#) or [210](#))

Loans for Financing Private Solar Energy

An initiative in Berkeley, California has turned heads around the nation. Former appointee in the U.S. Department of Energy under the Clinton Administration, Francisco DeVries saw an opportunity to make solar energy affordable for the private homeowner. At an average up-front cost of \$30,000, DeVries was initially turned away from installing solar cells on his own roof, despite his desire to be green and to lead by example. In order



to make this installment affordable, DeVries' devised a plan to finance solar cells through a Sustainable Energy Financing District. That district would sell bonds, whose proceeds could finance the up-front costs of photovoltaic systems for interested homeowners. Then, those homeowners could use the money they would save on utility bills to pay off the district funded photovoltaic system through a monthly tax assessment. When it's all said and done, the tax assessment (about \$172 per month), would be very close to the cost of the average utility bill. This system therefore allows homeowners to see little to no increase in monthly payments, and yet have the satisfaction of reducing greenhouse gas emissions. On top of that, in about 20 years their \$30,000 photovoltaic system would be paid off, and they could then enjoy FREE energy! This initiative is very promising, and with Charleston having a high solar energy potential, hopefully we too will adopt this innovative funding system. Click [here](#) to read the in depth article about DeVries initiative.

**In addition, click [here](#) to see how the city of Boston is tracking their progress towards an increase in solar power by creating an online map of solar energy facilities throughout the city.

Because off-shore wind energy is still a relatively new concept in the U.S., North Carolina doesn't currently have a process to permit wind energy facilities in the state. Officials are rushing to change this regulatory straight jacket before they are faced with the embarrassing prospect of having to reject a "green" energy project on technical grounds. The irony of the matter is that an environmental law seems to be standing in the way of off-shore wind energy. In order to transport



the energy from offshore to the mainland, the beach and dune area must be crossed. However, law prohibits almost all development between the dune line and the ocean. The proposed plan would bury the energy lines under the beach, and would take care to cause as little disturbance to the natural environment as possible. "The key to any project remains making sure it is sited in a location that alleviates environmental and community concerns. That could be the biggest challenge facing any serious wind-generation projects in the state, since some of the "best places" on top of mountaintops and in coastal waters for consistently strong winds are also some of North Carolina's most scenic locations." With the environment in mind, wouldn't we rather see a wind mill seated on top of a scenic mountain, as opposed to a smog emitting coal plant? The eyesore argument against wind energy is simply illogical, and hopefully new legislation will allow North Carolina to invest in green, clean, and beautiful off-shore wind energy.

For more information, contact Gareth McGrath of Star News, Wilmington, at 343-2384

Green House Made of Shipping Containers, LOCAL!

Associated container, a company out of North Charleston, is building energy efficient homes. They donated their model to Sea Island Habitat for Humanity. The house was built from recycled shipping containers. It has taken six months to build and the cost has already exceeded 200,000 dollars. "It's got a water recycling system, shower water turns into the toilet water. So it's very efficient," added Christa Lewis, Advancement and Communications Manager. "It's hurricane proof, it's termite proof, it's fire proof," added Andrew. The house donor, Steve Newman, originally donated the home to be used as habitat house. But it didn't fit Sea Island's model of simple housing. "The next idea was to then auction it to raise money for habitat homes." Sealed bidding for the house started on June 31st, and will continue to be accepted for sixty days. Click [here](#) to see a Channel 5 news video clip about this exciting new sustainable home!



For more information, contact Nikki Seibert, the Green Building Coordinator of Sea Island Habitat for Humanity at 910-297-4432 or Seibertn@gmail.com

SCE&G submitted plans to state regulators last Tuesday, June 31st, to propose a set of energy savings programs. SCE&G gave the public a chance to voice their opinions on what programs they would like to see, and from those suggestions, and much deliberation, they have proposed a total of nine energy saving programs. These programs are the result of an order approving two new nuclear reactors near Jenkinsville, in which SCE&G is required to come up with an energy efficiency plan, to help slow down the need for any more new power plants. These programs must win the state Public Service Commission's approval before they go into effect, and that process could take months. The programs proposed include cash incentive for customers installing energy-efficient central air conditioning and heating pumps, and discounts for buying compact fluorescent bulbs from certain stores. In addition, an upfront cost of \$40, followed by a \$20 rebate, would pay to install an energy monitoring system, which would help home owners keep track of and reduce the amount of energy they are using. Also, a residential benchmark program would be installed, in which customers would be provided with information on energy use of homes similar to theirs, and suggestions on how to reduce their own energy usage. This is only to name a few, and "SCE&G's goal is to begin rolling out the programs next spring," said utility spokesman Eric Boomhower, so be prepared to jump on any energy saving opportunities this initiative may provide!