

Short Read 1

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Notes

TheHopevilleLedger Morning Edition

Town Tackles Energy Debate

by Francisco Blane

1 Last night, Hopeville's Mayor Julia Sanchez held a town meeting with town residents to discuss plans for a new power plant. The plant would be built on unused farmland on the outskirts of the city. So far, no one agrees on what kind of energy to invest in.

2 "The federal government will give us \$200 million," Sanchez said. "But that will only pay part of the cost. We will have to raise most of the money ourselves. The question is what kind of energy plant will we develop?" The mayor presented two alternatives: natural gas or solar power.



The Hopeville town meeting drew a crowd of concerned citizens.



Some power plants use solar panels to convert light to electricity.

3 A loud debate followed her remarks. Tom Bradshaw, a professor from Southwest University, said, "We must pursue solar power. Solar power is energy from the sun. It's free and clean. We can't continue to release greenhouse gases that cause the planet to overheat." He showed the audience a report from the California Energy Commission. It said that one day of sunlight contains more than twice the energy people could use in one year.

4 Vicki Tomlin, a store owner, also argued for a solar-powered plant. "It would be good for Hopeville's economy. People will want to move here," she said. "Look at the statistics on the EcoNews website. Around 20,000 new jobs were created in the field of solar power last year alone. The fossil fuel industry is cutting jobs."

5 However, real estate developer Carlos Hill cautioned against solar power. "The Mesa Palms solar plant two counties over cost \$2 billion. We can build a natural gas plant for half that amount. Yes, fossil fuels are nonrenewable, but they are still available. We found a large natural gas reserve near where we plan to build."

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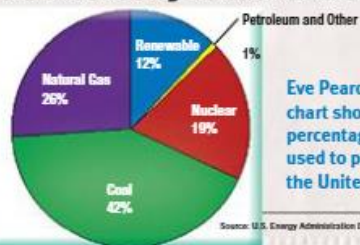
6 At this point, the meeting heated up. “We all have our statistics, Mr. Hill,” said Eve Pearce, a spokesperson for Lightpath Energy. “The Mesa Palms solar plant was expensive. But it generates enough power for 100,000 homes— more than you need! You could make money selling the extra electricity to other towns.”

7 Pearce cited findings from the Environmental Protection Agency. “In 2012, over 70 percent of our electricity came from burning fossil fuels, mostly coal and natural gas,” she said. “In other words, electricity generates the largest share of greenhouse gas emissions,” she stated. “That has to change.”

8 Hill interrupted, saying, “But natural gas is a cleaner fossil fuel. It produces half as much carbon dioxide as coal. And that’s according to the Environmental Protection Agency. Plus, new drilling technologies and mapping tools make extracting the gas more efficient.”

9 No decision was reached at the meeting. Mayor Sanchez promised to hold more public meetings before a decision is made.

U.S. Electricity Net Generation by Fuel



Eve Pearce displayed this pie chart showing the percentages of fossil fuels used to power electricity in the United States in 2012.

Source: U.S. Energy Administration Data

The Hopeville Ledger Morning Edition

Editorial

The Ledger received many Letters to the Editor in response to yesterday’s article, “Town Tackles Energy Debate.” Space limits us to printing just these three.

Sunshine Is Free: Go Solar!

11 Hopeville should build a solar plant. Sunshine is free. And unlike nonrenewable fossil fuels, sunshine will always be available.

12 Tom Bradshaw pointed out that “one day of sunlight contains more than twice the energy people could use in one year.” His information came from the California Energy Commission, a trustworthy source. I think we have to pay attention to this fact. A solar plant is costly. But it will power clean energy to tens of thousands of homes, or more. As Eve Pearce pointed out, the Mesa Palms solar plant is evidence of that.

13 It may be true, as Mr. Hill said, that we still have plenty of fossil fuels. But fossil fuels won’t last forever. Nonrenewable means they cannot be replaced. Someday, they will be gone. We need to be ready when that happens.

14 We should develop technology that helps us generate clean, efficient power. Hopeville should have a solar power plant. The reasons are clear.

— Roy Smith

Short Read 2

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Notes

Natural Gas: The Natural Choice for Hopeville

- 15 I am not against solar power, but Hopeville needs a more cost-effective power source. Natural gas is the better choice right now. It's available and much more affordable.
- 16 The Mesa Palms solar plant cost \$2 billion to build! The federal government will only give Hopeville \$200 million. Where will we get the rest of the money? We won't be able to get that back from the few thousand we might make selling our "extra" electricity to other towns, as Ms. Pearce suggested.
- 17 Carlos Hill makes a strong argument for natural gas. It's right there in the place where the mayor wants to build. Plus, natural gas produces just half the carbon dioxide of our current coal-burning power plant. What's more, new technologies make getting gas out of the ground more efficient. That means even less carbon dioxide in the atmosphere. We could provide power to Hopeville for many years to come with the natural gas reserve in our own backyard.



a natural gas power plant

18 Perhaps in the future, solar power will be cheaper to produce. Right now, the cost-effective source is natural gas.

—Brenda Sparks

Too Many Statistics, Too Few Facts

- 19 The question before Hopeville is do we want solar or natural gas power? We need more information to make a decision. Last night's meeting did not help. People just threw around facts and statistics. They caused more confusion than clarity. We need a group to study both sides of the issue in depth.
- 20 Some people said solar power is too expensive. Their only evidence was the Mesa Palms solar plant. That plant was built five years ago, and it is just one example. Have they looked at others? Do they know why Mesa Palms was so expensive? We need to look more closely. Surely new solar power technologies exist that are less expensive. Plus, we don't need a power plant for one hundred thousand homes. Half the size is all Hopeville needs.
- 21 Some people said natural gas causes too much pollution. But is that true? I've heard conflicting evidence. Eva Pearce said electricity production was responsible for over 70 percent of U.S. greenhouse gas emissions in 2012. What percentage of those emissions is due to natural gas?
- 22 In my opinion, we cannot yet make an informed decision about what kind of power plant to build. That is because we do not have enough information. We should study the facts carefully. Then we can decide whether to choose solar or natural gas energy.

—Rosaria Cruz

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