

A smarter energy future

Energy Innovation Task Force

By KATIE ONHEIBER
 In the Asheville area, burning coal is the largest single source of carbon emissions, releasing the equivalent of 500,000 cars annually. Daily, we are breathing that dirty air and contributing to climate change. The shift to more sustainable energy sources in order for us to live in a healthier environment is a priority in our mountains.

Leaders in our local government, business and nonprofit community are banding together to provide local opportunities that carry global impacts by forming the Energy Innovation Task Force. The Task Force works to curb our demand for fossil fuels and offer clean energy programs and incentives.

This partnership is inspired by concerned community members including the City of Asheville, the Asheville Beyond Coal initiative and Duke Energy's Western Carolinas Modernization Plan. Asheville Beyond Coal campaign was a key player in successfully advocating Duke to close its Lake Julian coal plant. In 2015, Duke announced in its modernization plan that it will replace the coal plant with two new 270-MW natural gas units and a potential 190-MW third "Peaker" unit to be built in the early 2020s. The "Peaker" plant is slated for use during periods of high demand.

Natural gas is a far cry from clean, renewable energy and hopes are high that the Task Force can delay or avoid the construction of



City of Asheville

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the third "Peaker" unit. Duke's Moderation Plan includes the formation of the Task Force for this exact purpose. Avoiding or delaying the need for the third unit is a primary goal in an effort to transition Western North Carolina to a cleaner, affordable and smarter energy future.

The Task Force includes Sierra Club, Duke Energy, City of Asheville, Buncombe County Board of Commissioners, Green Opportunities, Mission Hospital, Biltmore Farms, New Belgium, Buncombe County Tourism Development Association, UNC Asheville, Self-Help Credit Union, Asheville Chamber, Sustainable Advisory Committee on En-

the end of 2016 to increase energy efficiency and renewable energy and inform and engage the public. The plan will leverage utility expertise, programs and investments, city and county resources, actions by Task Force members and the community.

Our region's natural beauty, clean air and fresh water are why we call this place home and why so many people visit. Protecting our lands, waters and air is not only an environmental issue but also an economic one.

Help our neighbors understand the role they play, from purchasing foods and products made thou-

Energy Innovation Task Force Subcommittees

- **Programs** – Provide increased promotion of and access to new and existing energy efficiency programs. Look at program implementation and solutions to challenges.
- **Technology** – Make deliberate investment in distributed energy resources (DER) working closely with Duke Energy's DER team. Focus on technical analysis for programs like solar installations, battery storage for energy generated by renewable sources, electric vehicle infrastructure and advanced utility metering.
- **Community Engagement** – Help the community understand ways to reduce energy use and opportunities to invest in clean, renewable energy. Develop a branded umbrella campaign, communications templates and communications strategies.
- **Peak Reduction** – Identify the peak reduction goal needed to delay and hopefully avoid construction of the "Peaker" unit, the date by which this goal must be met and benchmarks to measure progress. Reducing the amount of energy the area uses during periods of peak demand will be a critical aspect.



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ergy and Environment, Sundance Power and WNC Green Building Council.

The Green Building Council is thrilled to be part of the solution. With 15 years of experience executing programs like Green Built NC, LEED for Homes, Green Gauge and Appalachian Offsets, our nonprofit is making significant strides in creating a greener, healthier community. The Green Building Council's program's lower energy use in new and existing homes and bridge the gap between utility programs and what the City offers. WNCGBC Executive Director Sam Ruark-Eastes chairs the Programs Committee, helping to see innovative and accessible energy efficiency programs come to fruition.

The task force anticipates developing a two-year work plan by

sands of miles away to driving gas guzzling vehicles to using inefficient incandescent lightbulbs in homes and businesses. This collaborative partnership is an opportunity to launch clean-energy projects and programs, and to educate our community members on the impact of their actions and how they can make a difference.

Make your voice heard. Visit www.ashevilenc.gov/departments/communityrelations/energyinnovationtaskforce.aspx for more information on meeting dates and locations.

Katie Onheiber is the Communications and Marketing Manager at Carolina Mountain Land Conservancy (www.carolinamountain.org). She is the former Education, Events and Membership Coordinator for WNCGBC. She has a background in events management, fundraising and marketing.

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"We have been live now for thirteen months and we have paid Duke Energy just over \$500 for this time period. Our 4,300 square foot home is 100% electric and we do nearly all of our driving with two all electric Nissan Leafs.

Thirteen Months Cash Money Solar Power Generated = \$1,575
One Month Average Thus Far = \$121.15

Other than marrying my Wife Stephanie Sue, buying this killer house on the Tuckasegee River we call home, I'd have to say installing solar is the third best investment I have ever made. Appalachian Energy Solutions continues to provide excellent customer service for our system and the results above are a testimony to the quality of their work and materials!

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