



SouthCoast soaks up

SOLAR POWER

■ A New Bedford firm will hold a solar energy roundtable to tout an industry set to expand locally and across the state thanks to regulatory incentives.

■ Site work has begun on a 1-megawatt solar facility in Acushnet, and a second project in town has been granted a special permit.

Page A10



Normandin Middle School, at top, and Abraham Lincoln Elementary School, both in New Bedford, derive energy from rooftop solar panels.

New Bedford-based Beaumont Solar worked with Consolidated Edison Solutions to install the panels.

"It's really kind of a great story in terms of green-collar job creation and career paths."

PHIL CAVALLO, president of Beaumont Solar



City solar company goes on road to champion growing industry

By BRIAN BOYD
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A New Bedford company that designs and builds solar projects is bullish on the market for the alternative energy source in Massachusetts.

Beaumont Solar Co. is touting the appetite for solar power by holding an industry roundtable this week. Nationally, the solar industry is expected to grow tenfold over the next six years. This state will attract much of the business thanks to policy initiatives, said Phil Cavallo, president of Beaumont Solar.

"Massachusetts is one of the most sought after states," he said. "The state is sought after because the regulatory environment is great, and the incentive environment is great."

In terms of incentives, solar power producers can earn tradable credits. They can sell those credits on the open market to power distributors such as NStar, which can buy them to help satisfy alternative energy minimums imposed on utilities, Cavallo said.

The state incentives are known as solar renewable energy credits.

New solar farm proposals are surfacing in the area on a regular basis.

When asked why that might be the case, Cavallo said Southeastern Massachusetts is a leader in renewable energy in part because there are many environmentally conscious people in the area, and electricity costs are high.

"There is a real motivation to get off the grid and try to be self-reliant," he said.

His company worked with the city and Consolidated Edison Solutions to install solar panels



PHOTO COURTESY NANCY EVANS PHOTOGRAPHY

Beaumont Solar Co., the New Bedford-based company responsible for installing solar panels on Normandin and Keith Middle Schools and Lincoln Elementary, will hold an industry roundtable in Milford this week.

on Keith Middle School, Normandin Middle School, Abraham Lincoln Elementary School and other public buildings.

More recently, a project to build a roughly 9,500-panel, 2.5-megawatt project on private land in Dartmouth has upset some residents who didn't learn about it until construction had already begun. (Beaumont is not involved in that project.)

His company is holding the roundtable Wednesday at an appliance distributor's facility in Milford. Clarke Corp., which distributes Sub-Zero, Wolf and Asko, powers its 106,500-square-foot showroom and warehouse

facility entirely with 2,300 panels Beaumont installed on the roof.

The roundtable panelists will include a hedge fund manager who invests in solar projects, an accountant to discuss financial considerations, and representatives from companies that have used solar power. Matthew Morrissey, executive director of the New Bedford Economic Development Council, will also participate.

"You have to have all the players there at the table so people get a feeling for what the economics look like, what the tax treatment is," Cavallo said.

Beaumont had held its first industry panel discussion last summer in the city at the Fairfield Inn & Suites. Cavallo said he plans to hold similar events quarterly, traveling to different parts of the state.

Chris Parker, director of finance and information technology at Clarke, said the distribution business first considered solar power in 2006 but held off when the recession started.

It revisited the possibility after business started to pick up and turned on its rooftop panel last August.

"We wanted to put enough solar panels up on the roof to cover total annual consumption," Parker said.

A federal grant covered 30 percent of the \$2 million project. The company reduces its electricity bills to zero and earns the tradable credits, he said.

While it makes economic sense, an environmentally friendly attitude was also a motivation for Clarke.

"We have a little bit of a green side to us," Parker said.

Beaumont, which employs 35 people, is providing internship opportunities to students at Greater New Bedford Regional Vocational-Technical High School. The solar industry will provide workers skilled in electronics alternatives to the construction field, Cavallo said.

"It's really kind of a great story in terms of green-collar job creation and career paths," he said.