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LOWER ALLOWAYS CREEK TWP. — The township committee here is currently gathering information on solar power and the potential energy savings the green technology could bring to many local government-owned buildings.

Committeeman Robert Breslin III said a resolution was recently approved by the committee soliciting request for proposals (RFPs) for a potential solar project.

“Each year as we continue to grapple with the budget you can only look at two options — increase revenues or cut expenses,” said Breslin. “We believe that solar energy does both.”

Breslin said the township could increase revenue with the use of solar renewable energy credits (SRECs) and cut costs with energy savings on the township’s electric bill.

SRECs are issued once a solar facility has generated 1,000-kilowatt hours of energy, and then are sold to companies who lack solar energy production. The kilowatt hours are calculated through either estimated or actual metered production.

Electric producers are required to yield a certain amount of solar energy by the New Jersey Board of Public Utilities (BPU), and if they do not, they must buy SRECs.

The fine for these companies that don't produce enough energy is set at approximately \$400 per SREC.

Though the potential use of solar in LAC is still in the early phases, township officials said the scope of the project could include, the municipal building, Leisure Arms, senior community center, LAC Fire and Rescue Station, public works garage, and even the LAC School.

“Leisure Arms was built with solar in mind,” said Breslin.

Breslin said during the 1980’s when the senior complex was built, the country was facing an oil crunch and hot water solar systems were all the rage.

“It ended up being a flop because it involved too much maintenance, but the complex was still constructed to aim in the perfect angle for sunlight exposure.”

Breslin said he feels this gives the township an advantage when it comes to electric bill savings.

“We don’t view solar projects as an expense, but rather reinvesting capital for a higher rate of return,” said Breslin.

The township committee is not only open to rooftop solar, but even ground mounted systems in some areas.

“We have an abandon tennis court near the municipal building which would be an ideal location for a ground mounted system,” said Breslin.

Since advertising for RFPs, the township has already had a few vendors stop by to pick up applications. Breslin said the information they are soliciting will be the basis for the committee’s decision.

“It’s a smart thing to do. We just need the info back from the vendors to see the potential cost of the project,” he said.

Even if the solar project gets approved, Atlantic City Electric has the final say on whether LAC has the connection capacity for solar.

“Solar capacity should be no more than 10 percent of the municipal total consumption,” said Breslin. “Our town is not there yet, so we should be able to move forward if the project is approved.”

Continued discussion on the solar project is expected at the August township committee meeting. Information can also be found in the township newsletter.

“We want the public’s input,” said Breslin. “Because we want to avoid any tax at all for the residents.”