

Board of County Commissioners

Agenda Request

Date of Meeting: March 17, 2009

Date Submitted: March 4, 2009

To: Honorable Chairman and Members of the Board

From: Lynn Artz, County Commissioner, District 5

Subject: Request Board Approval to Direct Staff to Identify Ways to Increase Demand for Installation of Solar Hot Water Heaters in Wakulla County

Statement of Issue:

This agenda item requests Board approval to direct staff to identify ways to increase local demand for the installation of solar hot water heaters by trained local installers.

Background/Description:

Tallahassee Community College (TCC) offers a non-credit course in Solar Thermal at its main campus. TCC is willing to offer this course at TCC's Wakulla Center later this spring. Ten students must enroll at a cost of \$109 per student. TCC, the Economic Development Council, and others will help to publicize the course offering. The Chamber of Commerce will provide Burt Poole Scholarship funds to cover tuition for some students. The County should consider enrolling one or more of its employees in this course.

Once a cadre of local workers has been trained to install solar water heaters in new and existing buildings, there must be sufficient demand for them to be able to put their new skills to work. Sustainable Big Bend will assist by collecting the names of potential customers at the March 21 Green Living Expo. The County should consider hiring some of the new trainees (or have its newly trained employees) retrofit the county's ~13 hot water heaters. Most importantly, the county should consider offering low-interest loans, rebates, tax credits, or the like to help interested homeowners defray the upfront costs of installing an energy-saving solar hot water heater in their home.

Analysis:

This initiative is consistent with Board priorities for sustainable economic development and energy efficiency. Workers in the building trades, homeowners, TCC, and the County all would benefit.

Options:

1. Approve directing staff to identify ways to increase local demand for solar thermal.
2. Do not approve directing staff to explore this subject.
3. Board direction.

Recommendation:

Option #1