

Coming to Consensus on Policies to Reduce Energy Consumption and Cost in Local Governments and Schools -- League of Women Voters of Appleton Local Study Report 2009/2010

Background

The League of Women Voters of Appleton adopted the following local support position on Energy Conservation in 1981:

- A. Local government's role in energy conservation:
 1. Review and revise local codes, policies, and ordinances to encourage energy conservation
 2. Meet energy standards in its own buildings.
 3. Consider energy implications of its actions.
 4. Support transportation measures:
 - a) Transit system.
 - b) Energy-efficient vehicles for government use.
 - c) Bicycle use through safe and convenient routes and conditions.
 5. Support solid waste disposal.
 - a) Recycle whenever possible.
 - b) Promote recycling in a positive way.
 - c) Public education on energy.
 - d) Provide technical assistance.
 - e) Provide energy information.
 6. Make information on energy available at the time of sale of buildings.
- B. Solar Access:
 1. Legislation supported at state and local level.
 2. Existing areas need flexible standards
 - a) No building or vegetation should be required to be removed in order for solar equipment to be made usable.
 - b) General support to protect solar equipment from subsequent building or vegetation.
 3. New development should have strict solar access standards.
 - a) Street and building siting. (Correction 2001)
 - b) Selection and planting of street trees.
 - c) Solar access guaranteed for the building itself.

The focus of our efforts in the 2009-2010 study was to determine if we could make any of these positions more "actionable" at a local policy level without getting into too much detail on how energy consumption should be reduced. The study group agreed that a comprehensive, systematic approach is needed for any organization to succeed in achieving its necessary reductions in fossil fuel consumption. Thus much of our inquiry was focused on local governments' adoption of the comprehensive, systematic approach known as The Natural Step Framework for Sustainability.

The following resources were used to learn more about policies that reduce public institutions' energy consumption and cost:

- *Toward a Sustainable Community: A Toolkit for Local Governments*, published by Focus on Energy and UW Extension
<http://www4.uwm.edu/shwec/publications/cabinet/reductionreuse/SustainabilityToolkit.pdf>
- *Building a Green Capital City: The Natural Step to Madison's Sustainable Design and Energy Future*
<http://www.cityofmadison.com/sustainability/city/documents/BuildingGreenCapitalCityTNSmadison.pdf>
- 2 Webinars produced by The Natural Step USA Network:
<http://www.naturalstepusa.org/sustainability-courses/>
 - Raising Awareness and Building Cultural Change for Sustainability
 - Introduction to The Natural Step Framework
- The grant application submitted by Outagamie County, the City of Appleton, Appleton Area School District, Town of Buchanan, Town of Grand Chute, Town of Greenville, Hortonville School District, Village of Kimberly, and City of Seymour to the Wisconsin Office of Energy Independence, for a plan to reduce fossil fuel energy consumption in those municipal entities by 25% by the year 2025. Although the grant request was not funded, this document provides good insights into the kind of baseline assessment work required to achieve significant benchmarks in the right direction, with a compelling vision of energy independence as the long-term goal.

The Questions

The local study committee recommends that the League of Women Voters of Appleton Board pose the following questions to its League membership, to determine consensus on the matter of adding these points to its existing Energy Conservation position:

Should the League of Women Voters of Appleton add that local governments and schools

- promote awareness of all the costs of fossil fuel energy use - environmental , health and social as well as economic costs?
- develop and communicate a clear, compelling vision for their energy future?
- complete baseline energy use assessments before comprehensive energy reduction plans are undertaken?
- publicize clear goals and benchmarks in their plans to reduce energy consumption and cost?
- choose action steps to reduce energy use and cost by using a management framework for sustainability known as The Natural Step Framework?
- fully communicate to the public all energy and cost saving measures taken and results achieved?