

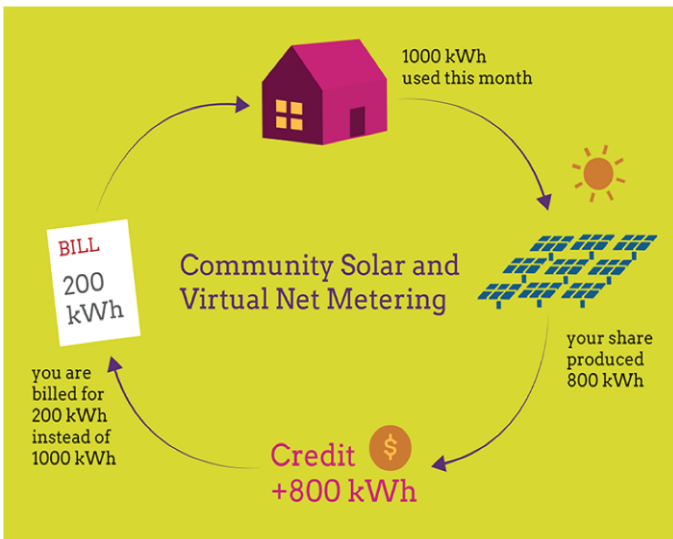


Montgomery County SIERRAN

Spring 2016

Community Solar Era to Begin in Maryland

by Stephanie Riddick



In 2015 bills HB1087 and SB398 with the support of the Sierra Club and a coalition of the solar industry and other environmental groups were passed by the Maryland General Assembly and signed by Governor Hogan.

This three-year pilot program of community solar will allow Maryland residents who have an electric bill, including renters and condo owners, to participate in a community solar program and have their electricity bills reduced.

The Public Service Commission (PSC) of Maryland is scheduled to finalize the regulations for community solar projects in May. Montgomery County Sierra Club Executive

Committee members have participated in General Assembly hearings and the PSC rule-making hearings to ensure the widest access of community solar projects for county residents.

Montgomery County residents can now begin to sign up for newsletters and on interest lists with various groups for this exciting new opportunity!!

A community solar project allows residents, including renters and those without good homes for solar energy, to buy as a subscriber into a community solar array. The array may be located on a business, church, vacant ground space or other good solar location. Afterwards the subscriber's utility company will reduce the resident's electric bill based on the amount of solar energy the subscriber has purchased. The resident's subscription remains valid as long as they live in their current utility company's service area.

Those who are interested in reading more can search under "community solar, Maryland" for recent articles on the subject and read the bills on the Maryland General Assembly website.

Individuals who want to receive a newsletter on community solar and express interest in participating in a community solar project can sign up with Maryland SUN (a non-profit group) at www.mdsun.org/community-solar and look for other groups and installers who plan to participate in community solar projects. Homeowners can also read about solar co-ops. This is a great opportunity for just about everyone to consider going solar!

UPCOMING EVENT!

The Montgomery County Greenfest is scheduled for April 30th in Takoma Park. Exhibitors specializing in solar energy are expected to attend. Visit <http://montgomerycountygreenfest.org> for more information.

Composting Program Update: Food “Waste” is a Valuable

Resource by Susan Eisendrath

The Composting Program, working in conjunction with the Montgomery County Food Council Environmental Impact Working Group (EIWG), is focused on expanding County composting of food waste (food that is unfit for human and animal consumption). Why food waste? According to the Montgomery County Waste Composition Study of 2013, 22.8 % of all solid waste collected in the County is food waste. Food waste is a valuable resource that can be recycled into compost and then used as a soil amendment for gardens, landscaping, and farming and it can be used for stormwater management. The County has a new waste reduction and recycling goal of 70 percent and it is clear, that to achieve this ambitious goal, we will need to target food waste as a major source to reduce within the waste stream.

Over the past six months, the Composting Program has been working with the EIWG, researching the status of food waste composting in the County, plans and models to establish residential food waste composting and identifying the challenges and solutions needed to advance food waste composting. While there are a few food waste composting pilot projects, larger scale, such as residential food waste collection and composting is limited by the lack of local composting facilities. We are exploring the potential with the County to establishing various scale food waste composting facilities, including on-farm composting, and expanding other composting programs such as backyard composting and community composting. In the next six months, we will be meeting with the Department of Environmental Protection Division of Solid Waste and County Council members as well as other stakeholders to establish plans to reduce food in the waste stream and increase composting.

We invite you to join our efforts to expand composting in the County! Contact Susan Eisendrath, susan.eisendrath@gmail.com

Montgomery County Green Bank Ready to Launch

by Mark Posner

With support and assistance from the Sierra Club’s Montgomery County Group, Montgomery County is preparing to launch later this year the Montgomery County Green Bank. The Green Bank was established by the County Council to significantly boost investment in clean energy and energy efficiency in the county. Since the County Council acted, the County has been meeting with interested citizens, including Sierra Club members, to ensure that the Bank will be fully ready to carry out its mission when it opens its doors to business.

In June 2015, the County Council enacted legislation to establish a County Green Bank, supported by testimony submitted by the County Sierra Club. The County then convened several work groups of interested citizens to study and consider a variety of issues, including how the new Green Bank will be governed, the most advantageous market opportunities for the Green Bank, and sources of funding for the Bank. Montgomery County Sierra Club members have actively participated in the work groups. The work group process will conclude in May.

The final step in this process will be for the County Council to designate a tax exempt, nonprofit corporation to serve as the Green Bank. This will be a quasi-public entity not part of County government. It will be governed by a board of directors of up to 11 members, which, it is anticipated, will include a representative of an environmental organization, two representatives from the County government, and persons with experience in clean energy financing.

The “Green Bank” concept is a relatively new financing mechanism to more effectively use limited public funds to leverage private investment in clean energy and energy efficiency. It may be implemented through a variety of governing and operating structures, and may utilize a diverse array of financial tools depending on the needs of the particular market being served. The State of Connecticut, for example, established a state Green Bank a few years ago, and has already tripled the leverage ratio of public-to-private funding for clean energy projects in the state.

In the 2016 session, the Maryland General Assembly considered bills to establish a state Green Bank, following completion of a two-year study that positively reviewed the Green Bank concept. The Sierra Club’s Maryland Chapter submitted testimony in support of these bills, however, the bills died in committee.

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Please visit our website at SierraClub.org/Maryland/Montgomery-County and ‘like’ us on Facebook

