

City's Energy and Sustainability Task Force Meets

August 31, 2007 - The City of Knoxville's Energy & Sustainability Task Force held its initial meeting Thursday kicking off an ambitious project aimed at making the city more energy efficient.

"The first thing we want to do is look at ourselves as an energy user," Mayor Bill Haslam told the group in opening the meeting, "and how we can both cut our energy costs and our environmental impact as a city."

"We're big users of energy," Haslam added. "Not counting fuel we spent about \$10 million on energy costs last year."

The task force will study all aspects of the city's energy use and develop a realistic plan to make changes needed to lower consumption and costs.

Part of that effort will include public meetings about the project and the city is creating a website to keep people informed about the task force's work.

The 15-member body includes representatives from the University of Tennessee, Oak Ridge National Laboratory, the Tennessee Valley Authority, the Southern Alliance for Clean Energy, Knoxville Utilities Board, Knox County, the U.S. Green Buildings Council, Blessed Earth, Alcoa, Knoxville's Community Development Corporation, the Foundation for Global Sustainability, the Knoxville Chamber Partnership, City Council, the Public Building Authority and the Metropolitan Planning Commission.

Madeleine Weil, the city's deputy director of Policy Development, is chairing the group and numerous city departments will be involved in gathering data, analyzing ideas and implementing changes.

Haslam said the two main things he would like to see the task force develop, "something we can actually do, not just good ideas" and something that is transferable to the community and other Knoxville and Knox County organizations.

Knoxville is a member of Local Governments for Sustainability, also known as ICLEI after a former name, and is using ICLEI's Cities for Climate Protection (CCP) program as the framework for this project.

More than 300 American cities are CCP members, including both Chattanooga and Memphis.

Weil said the city's first step, which is already underway, is to develop an inventory of City government's energy consumption, costs, and greenhouse gas emissions. That means the city is looking at every bit of energy it uses.

That includes everything from the electricity and natural gas used in its buildings, to the fuel running its vehicles to the energy needed to power streetlights, traffic signals and other outdoor lighting and the wastes it produces.

A community energy analysis is also underway but, "the framework we have set up is to sort out our own house first," Weil said. To that end, the City is developing an RFP for an energy

services provider to audit the energy use of City buildings and propose energy saving upgrades.

Weil said that after the energy inventories are complete the task force would recommend reduction goals for the City and community and develop a strategic plan to reach them. Building an ambitious but achievable plan for reducing the community's energy use will be the new task force's greatest challenge. "I think it's going to be about partnerships and that's the value of this group in the room today," Weil said.

The timeline calls for a draft plan to be ready by next July and for the final strategic plan to be completed and ready for use by November of 2008.

The Energy & Sustainability Task Force website is at www.cityofknoxville.org/policy/energy and is expected to be up next week.