

## Residents hear details about how they can 'Solarize Charlestown'

June 12, 2017 08:24AM By Catherine Hewitt Sun staff writer

CHARLESTOWN — Sol Power, a Providence firm, was recently chosen as the town's contractor for the Solarize Rhode Island program, which incentivizes homeowners to install solar panels through economies of scale when multiple households sign up.

Solarize Rhode Island is a residential and commercial solar campaign that partners with municipalities to offer solar panel installation at a reduced cost. Now in its third year, the partnership between the Rhode Island Office of Energy Resources, the Commerce Corporation, and the nonprofit marketing firm SmartPower has led to more than 475 residents and business owners in 13 municipalities signing contracts for small-scale solar electricity systems. Charlestown is the 14th municipality in the state to offer the Solarize program to its residents.

The program reduces solar costs by offering competitively selected installers, a tiered pricing system and time-limited offer to incentivize great participation and community-based marketing.

From this section:

Audubon report: Osprey population is on the upswing

The average price per watt for solar panel installation in Rhode Island is \$3.89, said Karen Stewart, Community Outreach Manager for SmartPower Rhode Island, but Sol Power offered a shared price model in three tiers: Tier one was \$3.14 per watt for one to 12 installations; tier two was \$3.04 per watt for 13 to 25 installations; and tier three was \$2.94 per watt for 25 or more installations.

"The idea of Solarize is to simplify the process for homeowners by selecting a contractor and having a limited sign-up period to allow a bulk purchase that lowers the price for everyone," said Ruth Platner, chairwoman of the Planning Commission, in an email Wednesday. "As more sign up, the price drops; early signers get money back as the price drops."

Platner said the solar installations are geared for homeowners and small businesses, including farms, for net metering, which credits solar homes for the electricity they add to the grid. These projects are not intended to produce electricity for the commercial sale of power, she said.

Eight qualified solar installers were scored by the town, the Commerce Corporation, the office of energy resources and SmartPower. Based on the scores, the list was whittled down to three installers the town interviewed.

Sol Power stood out because the town wanted to support a Rhode Island-based company. Plus, the company had a strong Charlestown connection because its vice president, Tyler Mason, is a town resident. Sol Power is also a worker-owned cooperative, where the workers have a stake in the company, which was another important factor in the decision process, Platner said.

"All of the companies we reviewed were very well qualified, but the Charlestown connection and the relationship of the workers to the company really made this company stand out," Platner said.

Platner and Julie Carroccia, vice president of the Town Council, wrote the application to allow Charlestown to qualify for the program. Platner, Carroccia, and residents Jeff Rayner and Stephen Stokes have worked as a team to provide information about the program to homeowners and small business owners.

For more information, go to [www.charlestowncitizens.org/solarize-charlestown/](http://www.charlestowncitizens.org/solarize-charlestown/).