

# Saranac eyes town garage going solar

by Jeremiah S. Papineau

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SARANAC — The town of Saranac is looking to the sky — and the federal government — to help produce power for its highway department garage.

The town has applied for nearly \$345,000 in funding from the federal government through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act to develop a solar panel system that would power the town garage on State Route 3. Councilman Gerald W. Delaney, who has been overseeing the application on behalf of the town council, said the town submitted its application in time for the Nov. 23 deadline and is awaiting word of its approval.

Delaney said the council has been examining ways to make buildings owned by the town more energy efficient, especially the highway department garage, a 12,000 square-foot building which utilizes a great deal of electricity on a regular basis.

“We have a good site [for generating solar power] where our town garage is, which is our biggest electricity hog,” said Delaney. “We spend between \$9,000 and \$10,000 a year in electricity and for a small municipal government [switching to solar power] could help a lot.”

The town worked with Triangle Electrical Systems and SolarNovar, based in Plattsburgh, in preparing the proposal submitted for the grant. Through studying the development of a solar power system at the town garage, Delaney said it's believed a system could produce enough electricity to accommodate 75 percent of the building's energy needs.

“Hopefully, we can produce more. There's some evidence they're more productive than that,” Delaney said of the solar power system.

Delaney said he is unsure when the town will learn whether or not the proposal is funded, but said if the project gets the green light, starting the project will only depend on the availability of Triangle Electrical Systems and SolarNovar and, of course, weather.

“If we knew by Dec. 30, I'd assume we could be up and running by April or May,” said Delaney.

The town has committed to contributing 3 percent of the cost of the solar panel system, if awarded, Delaney added. That amounts to approximately \$10,350, which he said would pay for itself with the potential energy cost savings.

“We would have less than a two-year payback cycle on this if we're accepted,” said Delaney. “But, just because we requested funding, doesn't mean we're going to get funding.”

Delaney said if the town's proposal isn't funded through the ARRA grant, the town board will examine other grant programs that could potentially cover the cost.

“If it makes financial sense for the town of Saranac, we will pursue it,” said Delaney.