

Montoursville resident expands his use of solar power

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Ron Baker of Montoursville was last visited by the Williamsport Sun-Gazette in October when he decided to add solar panels to his residence to ease the financial burden of the removal of the electric rate caps. Since then, Baker added different types of panels. And now, the electric company will be paying him for service.

"Last year, we installed phase one of the totality of what Baker wanted to do. After the first of the year, we began installing the second phase. It is a different type of photovoltaic panels. In the third phase, we put up solar thermal hot water panels. This is going to heat approximately 70 percent of his domestic hot water and it is heating the building space," said Kevin C. Larson Sr., president of K.C. Larson, Inc.

Photovoltaic panels are solar panels which use the energy from the sun and convert it into electricity.

According to Larson, the demand for such systems will increase as the costs for energy increase.

"One of the fables for the renewable energy systems that I am trying to negate is that the payback is 20 to 25 years. Present day, that is not true. We have seen four price drops on the renewable energy components since Thanksgiving. There is also a 30 percent federal tax credit for these systems," Larson said.

Larson believes that the four price drops may be the equivalent of a 15 to 20 percent rate decrease.

According to Larson, he can provide a contract to the system owner to sell their renewable energy credits with use of the photovoltaic electric producing systems.

The electric company will pay Baker approximately \$2,200 per year for the next five years. At the end of that period, Baker can renegotiate the contract or seek out a new contract with another electric supplier.

Essentially, the system will produce more energy than the building needs. The electric meter will go backwards and that system may heat the surrounding properties. Hence, the electric company will pay a contracted rate for use of the additional energy.

"Certain states require the public electric utilities produce so much electricity from renewable energy sources. If they don't, they will get fined. One thing they can do to meet the mandate is to buy renewable energy credits," Larson said.

According to Larson, based on Act 213, Baker's system has a certain number of renewable credits attached to it. An energy broker will put Baker's credits out for bid and the electric companies will buy the credits.

Act 213 is a law requiring electric companies to obtain a certain percentage of electricity supplied to its customers from renewable energy sources.

"Pennsylvania is just getting into the renewable energy credits," Larson said.

Baker has been keeping records of the amount of energy used since the final phase of the project was completed. "From (April 6) on, I have made enough power that I haven't used PP&L," Baker said.

The third phase of Baker's system was not activated until April 9. He was able to provide an extra three days of

energy in a very short amount of time.