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## Clean energy goal set

Worcester aims to cut fossil fuel

By Nick Kotsopoulos, TELEGRAM & GAZETTE STAFF

**WORCESTER**— Worcester has become the first city in the state to set a goal of using renewable energy sources to meet 20 percent of its municipal electricity needs by 2010.

The City Council last night unanimously adopted the “20 Percent by 2010 Clean Energy Resolution,” which calls for greater use of electricity generated from clean sources of power, such as wind, water and the sun, instead of electricity generated from coal, oil, natural gas and nuclear power.

The resolution was brought before the council by Mayor Timothy P. Murray on behalf of the Regional Environmental Council and Massachusetts Interfaith Power & Light. Six Connecticut communities have passed similar resolutions.

Carissa Williams, representing the Regional Environmental Council and Clean Water Action, said the council’s action puts Worcester in the position of becoming a clean energy leader in Massachusetts.

“Worcester has been on the leading edge of environmental issues before, such as the pay-as-you-throw recycling program and the mercury collection campaign,” Ms. Williams testified before the council. “The city of Worcester is now poised on the leading edge of a better, cleaner energy policy that can serve as a model for other cities. Its success will reflect the city’s proud tradition of industry and innovation.”

Lara Hoke, program director for Massachusetts Interfaith Power & Light, said there is a “moral duty” to create a clean energy future. She said her organization, based at the United Congregational Church on Institute Road, is “a nonprofit, faith-based initiative to work with the community of faith ... to promote environmental justice and care for creation.”

She said power plants that burn nonrenewable fossil fuels, such as coal, oil and gas, cause a great deal of pollution and degradation of the Earth, and harm the health and safety of those who live near them.

According to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, pollution from power plants in Massachusetts can be linked to more than 300 premature deaths, more than 8,000 asthma attacks, more than 700 heart attacks and more than 300 hospitalizations each year, Ms. Hoke said.

She added that Worcester County was among the dirtiest 10 percent of counties in the United States in terms of soot and smog in 1999.

“The city of Worcester has a chance to lead the way for all of us,” said Ms. Hoke, whose organization is based in Worcester and represents 70 congregations across the state. “With this resolution, the city of Worcester can give us an enormous boost toward a clean energy future,

environmental justice, and care for the earth and its inhabitants.”

Ms. Williams said there is now enough clean energy being produced in the United States to power every home in New England. She said supporting renewable energy also helps Massachusetts and the country to become less dependent on foreign sources of oil and gas.

“Clean energy is here, it’s real, it’s working, and we have to make more,” she said. “Worcester’s show of support for renewable electricity will help to continue the development of clean sources of power, which, in addition to reducing air pollution and global warming pollution, will not run out and will not be subject to price hikes and cost instability.”

Ms. Williams acknowledged there will be a financial aspect for the city in meeting the goal of 20 percent by 2010. But, she said, there is already grant money coming to the city from the state’s Renewable Energy Trust, because some city residents are purchasing clean electricity for their homes.

She said the more residents that sign up for clean energy, the more money the city will receive from that trust fund. She said that money can only be used for clean, renewable energy projects. Those projects can include purchasing renewable energy, energy education in the public schools and a solar panel installation.

“Residents of Worcester are supporting clean energy, and they are making it possible for the city of Worcester to cost-effectively support clean energy as well,” Ms. Williams said.

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