

Solar Co-Op Holds Final Info Session

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- Author/Byline: RYAN CORNELL
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HARRISONBURG - The Massanutten Regional Solar Co-op will host one last information session this week for residents interested in adding solar power to their homes.

The session is meant to educate the public about solar energy and the co-op process, as well as recruit new members. It will be held at 6 p.m. Wednesday in the Rockingham County Administration Center's fire and rescue training room, 20 E. Gay St., Harrisonburg.

The solar energy cooperative is open to residents of Harrisonburg and the counties of Rockingham, Shenandoah and Page. Its goal is to save homeowners money on purchasing solar panels, though joining the group is not a commitment to buy panels.

According to Virginia Solar United Neighborhoods, a nonprofit partnering with the co-op, group members can save up to 30 percent off the cost of installing a solar energy system by buying together.

Each member of the group owns his or her own system, but the collective goes through the process of buying the systems in bulk and choosing a single contractor to install them.

The cooperative was launched to build on the success of the Solarize Harrisonburg initiative. Nearly 70 homes in the area added solar panels through the program earlier this year.

Wednesday's information session follows a series of meetings held throughout the Valley in the past two months.

Joy Loving, a Grottoes resident who helped organize the Massanutten Regional Solar Co-op, said 77 people have signed up to join. Of those homeowners, 68 have roofs suitable for solar panels, she said.

A south-facing roof free from tree shade is typically needed to make solar work efficiently, she said. The ideal slope of a roof is 35 degrees, though flat roofs can be modified by using a tray of concrete blocks.

The cooperative is also soliciting proposals from solar panel installers. The co-op issued the request on Oct. 13 and will accept proposals until Tuesday. Loving said a selection committee will review the proposals in the week following. A contractor will be chosen during the week of Nov. 16.

She said those interested in joining the cooperative have until the beginning of next year to sign up.

Residents can sign up and learn more at www.vasun.org/massanutten-regional-solar-co-op.

Contact Ryan Cornell at 574-6286 or rcornell@dnronline.com

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