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—Contributor.....Stephen Dotson
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Notes from editor (not for publication):



HEADLINE ELEMENTS:

####BEGIN HED####

1 Plug-in solar comes to Brattleboro

####END HED####

####BEGIN SUBHED####

2 New technology finds a foothold as community groups
3 collaborate to help residents save on their electric bills

####END SUBHED####

4 TEXT BODY:

####BEGIN TEXT####

5 ON A COLD February morning, people occurred at the Tri-
6 Park Community's management office to celebrate the installation
7 of one of the first "portable solar" or "plug-in solar" systems in
8 the state.

9 Portable solar (also called plug-and-play solar) consists of
10 small solar panels that can be placed on a deck, balcony, roof, or

11 ground rack. Systems up to about 1200 watts (roughly three
12 panels) may be allowed, depending on final state rules.

13 These systems can be taken with you if you rent and
14 have to move, and can be expanded upon if a household needs
15 additional power. Homes that already have rooftop or ground-
16 mounted solar arrays may also benefit from adding more
17 generation this way, as well.

18 These systems have built-in inverters and plug directly
19 into an GFCI outlet in your home on a dedicated circuit. This
20 means that the power the panel generates goes directly to your
21 house, not the grid. It also means that there is no lengthy
22 paperwork or permitting process needed to install these systems.

23 * * *

24 THE TOWN OF Brattleboro is working with the Brattleboro
25 Development Credit Corporation to develop the local market for
26 this new form of solar, as it would serve parts of the community
27 who have been left out of renewable energy opportunities in the
28 past.

29 Leaders from the town of Brattleboro, Brattleboro
30 Development Credit Corporation, Southeastern Vermont
31 Community Action, Southern Vermont Solar, Brattleboro Savings
32 & Loan, and the national nonprofit Bright Saver have been
33 working together to pave a path for these systems to come to
34 Brattleboro and the nation.

35 Currently, the Vermont Legislature is in the process of
36 passing new legislation that would allow Vermonters to install
37 these systems (up to 1,200 watts) without any need for permitting
38 or paperwork with the utility. Vermont was one of the first to
39 announce this legislation, and 27 other states have followed suit.

40 This nationwide push to create a path for portable solar
41 has been led by the nonprofit, Bright Saver, which is dedicated to
42 bringing this affordable technology to North America. It has
43 worked with a large coalition of national and local organizations
44 to educate policymakers, industry experts, and the broader public
45 on the transformative benefits of this technology.

46 In Europe, these systems have been common for a
47 number of years, with millions of systems installed, but the
48 regulatory environment in the U.S. has prevented adoption until
49 now.

50 Bright Saver has selected Brattleboro as the intended site
51 for a pilot project, where they hope to distribute these systems to
52 a number of households experiencing energy burden, as a way to
53 demonstrate the impact of the technology.

54 * * *

55 IF YOU'D LIKE to learn about this new technology or help
56 move it forward:

57 • A Portable Solar and Home Energy Options Workshop
58 will be held at Brooks Memorial Library Wednesday, April 29,
59 from 5:30 to 8 p.m.

60 Food and child care will be available at the event. There
61 will be a demonstration system available at this event, which will
62 later be installed on the tool library, where it will charge the tools
63 and e-bikes that the library lends out.

64 • Come see the demo system at Tri-Park Community. It is
65 now up and running at the office at 42 Village Dr.

66 • If you live in Brattleboro and believe this plug-in solar
67 technology could help your household, take the survey found at
68 Brattleboro.gov/portablesolar.

####END TEXT####

BIO/COATTAIL:

####BEGIN BIO/COATTAIL####

69 **STEPHEN DOTSON** is the sustainability coordinator for
70 the town of Brattleboro. *The Commons'* Deeper Dive column
71 gives artists, arts organizations, and other nonprofits elbow room
72 to write in first person and be unabashedly opinionated,
73 passionate, and analytical about their own creative work and
74 events.

####END BIO/COATTAIL####

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