

Mayor's Column for the May 2, 2012 Review

My February 6, 2008, mayor's column about Evansville energy projects included a list of 35 local initiatives. The Janesville Gazette ran a front page story about our community's sustainability activities later in 2008. In the last four years, I have periodically updated this list as I learned of additional existing efforts and new initiatives.

On the day of our Energy Fair this year, Evansville hosted a day-long regional meeting of Wisconsin Energy Independent Communities that was sponsored by a partnership of the State Energy Office of Wisconsin and UW-Extension. The seminar topic was community outreach and education and the Evansville Energy Fair was showcased. During a morning presentation about Evansville, Alderman Jim Brooks spoke of the value of public power and our relationship with WPPI Energy, Heidi Carvin described energy efficiency activities in the school district, and I provided a summary of the Evansville 25 x 25 plan for energy independence and implementation to date. I distributed the most recent list of our community-wide energy initiatives.

The meeting attendees were "wowed" by the number and variety of our local sustainability efforts, particularly for a smaller community with no dedicated energy-efficiency staff. While we take many items on this list for granted, others see Evansville as a progressive Wisconsin energy leader, with initiatives occurring throughout the school district, business community, and our citizenry. I commend the hundreds of local participants who engage in "green" activities that enhance Evansville's reputation as a Wisconsin energy leader. Here is the current list of 94 energy-related initiatives in our community.

Energy Conservation, Efficiency & Green Initiatives in Evansville Updated 4/27/12

1. Tenth annual Earth Day Energy Fair on April 20, 2012.
2. Local teacher participation in KEEP (K-12 Energy Education Program) courses.
3. Classroom energy/conservation projects. Examples are students making biodiesel fuel and physics class energy conservation project to reduce the High School building energy consumption by 5%. Photovoltaic window installation in middle school to demonstrate solar power. Student study trips to experience rain forests in Panama.
4. Establishment of Grove Community Forest Trail, an educational and environmentally friendly community/school forest project. More than 2000 native trees and shrubs have been planted.
5. Local Eagle Scout builds benches and signs for Community Forest Trail from recycled wood.

6. Local Boy Scout Troop hosts Recycle Regatta as part of annual 4th of July celebration.
7. Annual National Theatre for Children energy presentations to school classes.
8. Construction of energy-efficient houses by high school trades classes with community and business support.
9. An after school club at Evansville High School designed a high mileage vehicle that won first place at the UW-Stout Supermileage Challenge in April 2008 (498 miles per gallon).
10. Evansville Lego Lords, an after-school robotics club, researched and prepared presentation on climate connections in 2008. The Club made their presentation to the Evansville Economic Development Committee, Common Council and Lions Club. In 2009, the topic was transportation.
11. Tree City designation for eleven years (trees reduce carbon dioxide emissions).
12. The City celebrates Arbor Day with an annual tree-planting program to ensure continuity of our tree-lined streets.
13. Evansville became a member owner of WPPI Energy, utilizing and benefitting from the many resources available with “joint action.”
14. 2007 Soybean Celebration/Festival. Installation of “Soybean” historical exhibit in 2009.
15. Fourth annual Harvest Windmill Festival in 2011, with focus on “buy local”, recycling, and Evansville’s history of windmill innovation.
16. Community and City support for North Prairie Productions biodiesel project, stalled for economic reasons.
17. Community and City pursuit of soybean crushing plant.
18. Early community committee, the Evansville Energy Initiative, dedicated to alternative energy education and projects.
19. Collection of wind data at high school (Bree-z).
20. Demonstration alternative energy projects such as solar heating of greenhouse and wind power aeration of retention pond.
21. Local dairy farm and area furniture business use off-the-grid solar light tubes for lighting work areas.

22. Solar panels for community swimming pool.
23. Geothermal heating/cooling system at high school.
24. High school cooperative student intern determined energy conservation measures and related cost savings at Eager Free Public Library.
25. Increased energy efficiency of City Hall during recent renovation with insulation, new furnace and lighting improvements.
26. Purchase of neighborhood electric vehicle for Water and Light Department.
27. City sidewalk and bike trails plans to improve alternative transportation options.
28. Investigation into establishment of a vanpool cooperative by a local resident.
29. Participation of 142 Water and Light residential customers in renewable energy purchase program, buying blocks of green energy. We have participated in the WPPI Energy program since April 2007.
30. Participation of 19 local businesses in the Green Power for Business renewable energy purchase program.
31. Use of biofuels in school buses.
32. Re-use of historic brick pavers and old Main Street streetlights.
33. Education of public that historic preservation is “green,” keeping waste out of landfills and saving the energy that is used to produce new construction materials.
34. Solar and lighting projects for new Public Works garage.
35. Incorporation of renewable energy and energy efficiency in City Wastewater Treatment Plant upgrade, including geothermal heating and vertical loop reactor mechanical treatment system.
36. Installation of 100 kW wind turbine.
37. Increased use of Compact Fluorescent Light Bulbs (CFLs) in City buildings.
38. Distribution of free LED night lights at Energy Fair and Senior Health Fair.
39. Distribution of free CFLs at City Hall and Senior Health Fair.

40. City Council passage of Resolution 2007-50, implementing community-wide energy conservation program with goal of 10% usage reduction and committing City departments to “lead by example”.
41. City Council passage of Resolution 2008-08, adopting state renewable energy goals, to make application to become a Wisconsin Energy Independent Community with a commitment of at least a level three program.
42. Receipt of Wisconsin Office of Energy Independence planning grant to undertake audit of municipal facilities and vehicles and draft community energy independence plan.
43. Evansville Energy Independence Team monitors implementation of 25 x 25 plan for energy independence.
44. Mayoral participation in programs at MREA Energy Fair in Custer, Wisconsin.
45. Mayoral presentations of Evansville Energy Initiatives to the Janesville Sustainability Committee, and a meeting of potential applicants for Pilot Wisconsin Energy Independence Communities Planning Grants in Whitewater.
46. City representation on Wisconsin Office of Energy Independence Legislative Committee and WPPI Energy Community Relations Advisory Group.
47. Mayoral attendance at annual APPA Legislative Rallies in Washington, D.C. to advance public power energy interests at federal level.
48. City participation in Rock County and Madison Metro exploration of commuter transit.
49. Interested citizens exploring establishment of local food cooperative.
50. Purchase of local produce by School District.
51. New LED lights for AWARE Love Lights Tree at City Hall, using just a fraction of electricity of prior years.
52. Energy conservation information and historic preservation reference materials obtained for Eager Free Public Library.
53. Chamber of Commerce-sponsored information session on commercial energy efficiency incentives and programs.
54. Local Chamber emphasizes buy-local.
55. Evansville EMS aluminum can recycling project.

56. Upgrading to high-efficiency lighting by community organizations, e.g. St. John's Lutheran Church and Evansville School District.
57. Purchase of soy oil-filled (biodegradable) transformer by Evansville Water and Light.
58. Evansville Water and Light selling new, energy-efficient LED exit signs to customers for \$12 at City Hall.
59. Evansville Water and Light offers incentive for tune-up of residential air conditioning systems.
60. Upgraded street lights to LED technology in residential neighborhoods.
61. Begin retrofitting of historic-style street lights with LED technology.
62. Unanimous endorsement by Common Council and February 2009 signature by Evansville Mayor of Climate Protection Agreement of the U.S. Conference of Mayors.
63. Evansville's oldest manufacturer, Baker Manufacturing, produced windmills from the 1870s to 1950 that were installed around the world. Renewable energy is part of our community's tradition.
64. Local builder specializes in construction of Energy Star homes.
65. Local entrepreneur sells mittens and aprons made from recycled clothing.
66. Local business specializes in construction of rain gardens and sustainable landscaping and presents programs and seminars on these topics.
67. Local company grows and distributes native plants and prairie seeds, pelletizing plant waste for use in heating their buildings.
68. Local hardware store has an active recycling program, including used CFLs, small electronics, and batteries.
69. Local engineering firm specializes in consulting on energy efficient building design.
70. Main Street Windmills on Parade art exhibit and auction.
71. Purchase of flex-fuel police squads and snow plow trucks.
72. Purchase of diesel-powered park mower.

73. Mayoral presentation at APPA Customer Connections Conference in Colorado.
74. Installation of vintage Baker windmill at entrance to Leonard-Lake Leota Park, celebrating the city tradition of renewable energy manufacturing.
75. Police department digitization of records, reducing paper use.
76. Lions Club recycling of eyeglasses, hearing aids, and cell phones.
77. Removal of soda machine from lobby of City Hall to reduce energy use.
78. City begins reducing energy with “low hanging fruit” efforts, such as upgrading computer monitors, installation of motion sensors for lighting in some bathrooms, and installation of automatic set-back thermostats.
79. School district begins reducing energy usage with “low hanging fruit” efforts, such as removal of refrigerators in individual classrooms.
80. Installation of biomass burner at Public Works Garage to capture heat from waste and diseased wood, reducing use of natural gas.
81. City purchase of blocks of renewable energy in an amount to offset annual electrical use of the public works facility and the water and light buildings.
82. Installation of variable frequency drive pump for well #3 on the city’s west side.
83. Segment of Evansville episode of Discover Wisconsin television program dedicated to the Energy Fair and local initiatives.
84. 2011 designation as a Bird City Wisconsin, including focus on natural habitat for birds.
85. Support for fledging farmer’s market with emphasis on buy local.
86. Citizens participate in a local Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) organic farm.
87. Exploration of establishment of a community garden.
88. Promote energy efficiency projects in local businesses with local utility expertise and incentives.
89. Periodic newspaper articles providing information and awareness of local energy initiatives.

90. Host local Clean Sweep collections, a program of the Wisconsin Department of Ag, Trade and Consumer Protection, to appropriately dispose of hazardous wastes.
91. Installation of a drug drop-off box at the local police station, with subsequent proper disposal of expired and unused prescription and over-the-counter drugs, reducing abuse of unused drugs and protecting groundwater.
92. Sponsorship of local e-waste recycling events to protect landfills from dumping of toxic materials.
93. Evansville Water and Light Utility pursuit of RP3 designation, which recognizes best practices in utility operations.
94. Evansville hosts state-wide energy meetings, including the Wisconsin Office of Energy Independence Legislative Committee and the State Energy Office “Energy On Wisconsin” Community Education and Outreach Meeting.

Community Announcements

Evansville EMS will hold its spring aluminum can drive on May 5. Aluminum should be placed near your curb before 8:00 a.m. or dropped off at the EMS garage on West Church Street. All proceeds will go toward new equipment for the ambulances.

The first outdoor Evansville Farmer’s Market of 2012 will be held from 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. this Saturday, May 5, at Creekside Place.

Curbside yard waste pick-up occurs the first full week of each month through October. Pick-up for this month will occur May 7-11. Yard waste should be bagged and placed on the terrace. Do not place waste in the gutter; it can clog storm drains.

Check out other Evansville activities on the community calendar at www.evansville-wisconsin.com.

Community Thanks

Kudos to the volunteers and participants of the tenth annual Evansville Energy Fair! It was a successful, wholesome, intergenerational evening of fun, learning, and socializing.

Evansville thanks Butch Beedle for his years of promoting sustainability in our community, particularly recognizing his efforts to grow and improve our remarkable energy fairs. Butch leaves us with enormous shoes needing to be filled.

Our community thanks Matthias James for his service on the City Economic Development Committee. Matthias’ dedication to downtown revitalization activities is greatly appreciated.