GEORGETOWN UTILITY TO BE POWERED BY SOLAR AND WIND ENERGY BY 2017

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A 150-megawatt solar power agreement recently finalized, in addition to a 144 megawatt wind power agreement in 2014, will make the City of Georgetown one of the largest municipally-owned utilities in the U.S. to supply its customers with 100 percent solar and wind energy*. The long-term agreements also allow Georgetown to provide competitive electric rates and hedge against price volatility for energy produced by fossil-fuels.

The City of Georgetown signed a power purchase agreement with SunEdison to purchase 150-megawatts of solar power starting in 2016. SunEdison will provide electricity to Georgetown through 2041. The new renewable power contracts signed by Georgetown provide electricity at a lower overall cost than its previous wholesale power contracts.

“SunEdison is very excited to be working with Georgetown Utility Systems to provide their customers with 100 percent renewable, clean energy,” said Paul Gaynor, executive vice president of North America Utility and Global Wind. “Georgetown is an exceptional city, and by going 100 percent renewable they cut down on pollution, save water, and enjoy stable energy prices. They’re able to accomplish all of this without spending a penny up-front with the SunEdison power purchase agreement. Georgetown is a model for other cities that hope to become powered by clean renewable energy.”

In addition, Georgetown has contracted with EDF for 144-megawatts out of a 194-megawatt capacity wind project—located 50 miles west of Amarillo—that will begin delivery of power next year. The Spinning Spur 3 project is currently under construction. A 20-year contract with EDF for wind power signed in 2014 will provide competitively-priced renewable energy to Georgetown customers through 2035.

The combination of solar and wind power allows the City to provide energy from complementary renewable sources in order to meet demand patterns. The solar power produced in West Texas will provide a daily afternoon supply peak that matches the daily energy demand peak in Georgetown, especially during the hot summer months. Wind power production in West Texas tends to be highest in the off-peak, evening or early-morning hours. This means that wind power can most often fill power demand when the sun isn’t shining.

The City of Georgetown municipally-owned electric utility started in 1911. The City closed its power plant in 1945 and began a long-term purchased-power contract to supply energy to its customers. Ending a long-term power contract in 2012 allowed the City to pursue new power suppliers.

“When Georgetown Utility Systems opted to seek new sources of power in 2012, we were charged with a mission to secure the most cost-effective energy that balanced risk and reward,” says Jim Briggs, interim city

manager for the City and general manager for utilities. “Our team took advantage of a unique time in the market place and did just that. By securing these renewable contracts the utility can consider itself 100 percent ‘green,’ but it does so at extremely competitive costs for energy, and it hedges against future fuel and regulatory risks, fulfilling our initial goal.”

The use of solar and wind-produced energy also means that unlike natural gas, nuclear, or coal-fired power plants, energy production for Georgetown will not require water. A power plant that burns fossil fuels or uses nuclear fuel can use large amounts of water each day. The use of solar and wind power in Georgetown will eliminate these impacts on the water supply and the environment. Using electricity that does not consume water is effectively a further reduction in the overall per capita water use for Georgetown. Another key goal of the utility is to become more effective in its use of water resources.

The City’s renewable power sources also may lead to an economic development benefit. Many companies, especially those in the high-tech sector, have invested in green sources of power for their office and manufacturing facilities. Georgetown’s 100 percent renewable power supply can help companies to achieve sustainability goals at a competitive price.

*Sources: Environmental Protection Agency Green Power Partnership, www.epa.gov/greenpower/toplists; Go 100% Renewable Energy, www.go100percent.org

https://georgetown.org/2015/03/18/georgetown-utility-to-be-powered-by-solar-and-wind-energy-by-2017/