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First Rockville Solar Co-op Meeting Successful, Second Set for May 5

By [Helen Triolo](#), last updated 5/4/15 12:00am



Pieter Mumm, another homeowner who already has solar panels, mentioned that with the 3kW array they installed, he had expected an 80% reduction, but in fact has produced more electricity than the house needs because of energy-saving measures they practice at home.

Photo credit: [Helen Triolo](#)

Corey and Emily of Community Powe
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The first meeting of the now-forming Rockville Solar Cooperative was well-attended, with Rockville area residents interested to find out the details about costs and benefits associated with installing home solar panels. A second meeting will be held on Tuesday, May 5 at City Hall for others interested in the same ([register here](#)). The Solar Co-op is being organized by the Rockville Environment Commission, in conjunction with MDSUN, part of Community Power Network, who have helped organize 25+ similar co-ops in the MD/DC area (like [this one we wrote about in 2013](#)).

Clark Reed, chair of the Rockville Environment Commission, opened the meeting, noting that this is a great time to go solar. 90% of people surveyed say they would like to have solar panels, and costs continue to come down. Clark noted that today's purchaser can buy 3 times what could be bought for the same price when his family put solar on their house ten years ago.

Stephanie Riddick, another Rockville resident with a solar-powered home (and an active volunteer with the Rockville Environment Commission who helped distribute flyers about the co-op all over Rockville), said that now is a good time to consider adding solar because of the 30% federal tax credit currently in place - it is not known how much longer this credit will be available. Her home has 10 panels that generate 40% of the home's energy and for which her household receives an annual check for that energy (as do all solar-powered homes that are tied to the grid). She noted that panels are more efficient today, and produce more power per panel than those installed a few years ago.

Pieter Mumm spoke about how his family first made it a goal to cut their energy consumption, and then installed a 3.5kW array of solar panels. They expected that would cover 80% of their energy costs but were happy to find they actually produced more power than they needed. They've since bought a LEAF and find that the power covers 50% of the energy needed to power that too.

Emily and Corey from MDSUN said over 500 people have participated in solar co-ops they've organized in the area, taking advantage of the collective buying power they offer. She gave details about how members of the co-op work together to determine their needs and give CPN the information needed to run a competitive bid on their behalf (CPN is installer-neutral, so it is up to the group to select the installer they wish based on the group's requirements - CPN is there to give advice based on past experience).

The Solar Co-op process (more details available [here](#)) begins with the group setting up a selection committee to work on the details of installer selection. Details of what the group requires (backup generators as an option, lease and sale options, high efficiency options, etc) will be worked out by this committee, with input and advice from MDSUN. Once an installer or installers (sometimes two) have been selected, members of the co-op have 30 days to decide whether to sign an agreement with the installer. MDSUN stays involved with the group through installation, but is not a legal entity; agreements are between the homeowner and installer.

More info: <http://mdsun.org/rockville>

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