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Posted June 8, 2017 12:02 am

Local solar co-op: An idea past due

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Last year Floridians were given two solar amendments on which to vote. Amendment 4 was delivered on the primary ballot and passed by a wide margin, with 73 percent of the vote. It needed only 60 percent.

Homeowners already enjoyed certain tax benefits for installing solar power, but the amendment brought businesses into the fold, exempting solar equipment from tangible property taxes.

The second amendment came up on the November general election ballot. It was heavily financed by power companies and was written so as to look like a consumer-oriented issue. It was anything but.

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It, basically, would have allowed utility companies to change the “net metering” process in which solar customers are able to sell back excess power to the grid.

It was defeated — a big win for solar consumers.

If you’ve had thoughts on going solar, there’s an effort afoot locally to form a discount program called St. Johns Solar Cooperative.

Its first effort here will be a meeting June 20 from 7 to 8:30 p.m. at the Willie Galimore Center.

A local couple will tell their tale of installing solar on their home last year — a primer of pros and cons. The meeting is sponsored by FL SUN, in cooperation with the League of Women Voters of Florida and the Environmental Rights Initiative of Compassionate St. Augustine.

According to the Solar Energy Industries Association, Florida ranks third in the nation for solar potential, but 12th in cumulative solar capacity installed.

It also says that the price of solar conversions has declined 64 percent over the past five years.

Similar declines are expected in the future.

The discount cooperative seems a good way to take advantage of the potential of the Sunshine State and save money. The program June 20 seems a very clear way to learn how a neighbor handled the conversion — and how it’s working today.

For information, go to flsun.org.



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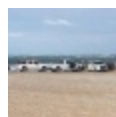
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