

# Johnson City considering solar power systems

The Associated Press

Johnson City officials are considering installing solar power systems at their city facilities.

The city wants to use ground and roof top photovoltaic systems that convert solar radiation into direct current electricity, according to the Johnson City Press (<http://bit.ly/nadA2q>).

Photovoltaic cells are similar to solar panels, which are used to produce hot water or steam. Photovoltaic panels convert the sunlight directly into electricity much like a solar-powered calculator.

The panels can be ground-mounted or built into the roof or walls of a building.

Officials are searching for a company qualified to assess the feasibility of installing and maintaining the systems.

Representatives from 11 interested firms attended a recent meeting to hear about the project. The intent is to have a company assess the facilities — such as fire stations, schools and water treatment plants — for possible use of the systems through the Tennessee Valley Authority Generations Partner Program.

"It may be all city facilities; it may be only a few," said Public Works Director Phil Pindzola. "The city will not finance anything, and the city will not provide incentives. The only incentive we know of is through TVA. But we're going to leave it to the companies to demonstrate to us their awareness of this and other programs."

The selected company would get an up-front credit of about 30 percent of the cost of installing the systems. TVA also would pay them 12 cents per kilowatt hour for all electricity generated by the systems that exceed the average usage.

When the system generates more electricity than is being used, the excess automatically flows into the grid and is sold to TVA, which is incentive for the firm that installs and maintains the new systems.

Meanwhile, the city would be able to lock in current usage rates and receive a royalty consisting of a percentage of the savings. That amount would be negotiated with the company.

Pindzola said the city's use of solar panels could catch on throughout the entire community, which he said could create more efficient energy use and reduce emissions.

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