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Stamford Board of Representatives committee approves alternative power plan

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STAMFORD -- A Board of Representatives committee Tuesday recommended approval of an energy agreement that would take the city government center off the traditional power grid.

Under the proposed 20-year contract, Stamford would agree to buy power from a Washington D.C.-based independent contractor, Pareto Energy, which would install an on-site power facility to provide electricity and hot and cold water to the government center. The city would not pay to construct the system or own it.

"It costs the city zero," Pareto Chief Technology Officer Shalom Flank said.

The Pareto business model is to work with cities to create "Energy Independence Districts," clusters of businesses or other users that switch from established city power infrastructure to a smaller, on-site energy grid. The company bills the technology, which uses fuel cells and natural gas generators, as more environmentally friendly than traditional energy sources and a way to take pressure off aging city power grids.

Top company executives, including Chief Executive

Guy Warner, made donations to Mayor Dannel Malloy during his bid to become governor in 2006. Pareto executives and Warner family members gave \$15,000 to the campaign.

Under the current proposal, Pareto would pay an estimated \$7 million to create the "micro" energy grid. The company has agreed to sell power to the city at or below any rate offered by the traditional provider, Connecticut Light & Power. The city would retain the option to use the traditional grid as a back-up power source.

In addition to the government center, the system may provide power to two nearby buildings operated by the city's housing authority, Charter Oak Communities, Stamford general counsel Tom Cassone said.

If the system generates more power than the government center and the Charter Oak buildings need, excess power can be sold back to CL&P, according to city

officials.

The contract includes a profit-sharing agreement that would provide the city with 70 percent of any such profits.

The agreement will go before the full Board of Representatives for final approval Monday. The Board of Finance recommended its approval, according to City Engineer Lou Casolo.

Pareto expects to secure various state and federal tax and rebate incentives, as well as private financing, to fund the project. In addition, the company hopes to receive a \$500,000 grant from the federal Environmental Protection Agency for the

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grid. Without such incentives, the project would not be viable, Flank said.

Pareto has worked closely with Stamford for years on the microgrid project. After the massive 2003 power outage that struck much of the Northeast, the city was seeking ways to reduce its dependence on the CL&P grid.

The company has worked for Stamford as an energy consultant since 2007, and one of its first responsibilities under its 2007 contract was to advise the city on establishing an Energy Improvement District.

By 2006, Warner had hired lobbyists to pass a law allowing such energy districts in Connecticut. Stamford officials later went to Hartford to testify in favor of the law, which passed in 2007.

Warner met Malloy during his first gubernatorial run through a friend within the U.S. Conference of Mayors. Malloy is a trustee and member of the executive board of the conference.

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