

City Hall Watch: Large solar farm garners approval

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San Francisco Examiner

05/05/09

One of the largest solar energy plants in California will soon open for businesses in the Sunset district.

Under a proposal approved Tuesday by the Board of Supervisors, privately owned Recurrent Energy would install a 5-megawatt solar plant at the Sunset Reservoir and sell energy to The City at a cost of about \$2 million annually.

The project was praised for boosting San Francisco's production of solar energy and creating local jobs, although some members of the Board of Supervisors said the agreement shortchanged The City.

Supervisor Ross Mirkarimi attempted to change contract terms to provide The City with a third chance, at 10 years, to purchase the system, in addition to years 7 and 15, and also create the possibility where San Francisco could buy it at below or fair market value.

Both changes were rejected. Public Utilities Commission General Manager Ed Harrington said Mirkarimi's proposal would "jeopardize" the project.

Supervisor Carmen Chu, who represents the Sunset, said the contract terms have "been [considered] for quite some time" and the agreement was the "best contract that is possible."

"We can put forward a contract that says we want something for nothing, but at the end of the day that's just not going to work," Chu said.

Supervisor Chris Daly was not convinced The City was receiving the best deal.

"Going green doesn't mean going green stupid," he said.

The project approval was praised by Mayor Gavin Newsom's spokesman, Nathan Ballard.

"The board did the right thing [Tuesday]," he said. "We took a major step toward reducing greenhouse gases and growing our green economy."

IN OTHER ACTION:

In an 11-0 vote, a \$250 inspection fee was approved for the Department of Public Works to charge owners of "blighted" properties.

In a 9-2 vote, an anti-loitering law around nightclub entrances and lines for admittance was adopted. It's intended to help police cut down on violence associated with such businesses.

Unanimous approval was given to a law requiring commercial and residential buildings to replace all water devices — in some cases at the point of sale and in others by January 2017 — with low-flow gadgets as part of an effort to conserve water.

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