

The Daily Commercial

Groveland wants to go green on city lighting

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GROVELAND -- Imagine city street lights that operate on their own through solar batteries. It would be a greener choice for the city, said Mayor Richard Smith.

The city's Community Redevelopment Agency board will consider solar lighting in lieu of electrical as it looks to add lighting across town. It let out bids on the project last week.

"Solar lighting is a different type of lighting, but the concept is not a new one," said James Shira, the vice president of B & H Consulting, who manages Groveland's CRA.

Shira said that currently there is not much lighting in the main downtown area around State Roads 50 and 33.

The new street lamps Groveland officials are considering would not require underground wiring.

City Clerk Teresa Begley noted that the lamps could even be moved.

"The poles are much more movable because the power source goes with the pole instead of underground and through a power grid," Shira said.

Even though the lights are more expensive to buy than regular street lamps, they would save money in the long run because they're not connected to the city's electrical grid. The lamps store solar energy in a battery located at the base of the fixture.

Once the sun goes down, a photo cell turns on the light, Shira said. Shira said the solar lights have a brain that can be programmed to dim their illumination as sunrise approaches.

Shira said the CRA expects to have a cost estimate after bidding ends on July 30.

City officials are hoping companies will bid on the entire project, from meeting FDOT illumination standards, to getting permits, submitting plans, getting approval.

Shira said FDOT has strict illumination guidelines, which the installation company would have to meet. FDOT Public Information Officer Steve Olson said FDOT adheres federal guidelines.

Shira said the funding for the lights would come from tax increment funding, or taxes the city has collected for the purpose of redeveloping various areas.

Monday, July 13, 2009 - www.dailycommercial.com/071309solar