
SEND US YOUR LETTERS

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OPINION

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READERS' LETTERS

Energy program would help make winter more bearable

As winter continues, energy costs are on everyone's mind. Aquidneck Island Planning Commission energy coordinator Sarah Cookson has designed a prototype, called the Energy Clearinghouse, to take some of the sting out of cold weather energy-related costs. The commission is committed to creating opportunities for energy conservation, cost reduction, education and regional policy development. Ms. Cookson has been reaching out to local, state, municipal and school officials to discuss energy saving projects.

The AIPC Energy Program is funded by a generous grant from the van Beuren Charitable Foundation.

Ms. Cookson's innovative approach would assist Aquidneck Islanders to reduce energy expenses through straightforward and uncomplicated measures. Many of her ideas stem from her experience as an energy fellow working with the Naval War College on energy efficient planning for its facilities. Energy efficiency and conservation are two of the most practical and effective

tools to lower energy costs for individuals, municipalities, schools, businesses and agencies. Such measures are relatively simple, yet can have a tremendous impact on the declining budgets facing all sectors. Cost saving is a significant goal for the Energy Clearinghouse.

Ms. Cookson envisions the Energy Clearinghouse as a regional repository containing an expertly researched collection of information and resources for all energy conservation measures. The clearinghouse will not build or create projects, but will provide concise and accurate information to citizens, businesses, municipalities, schools, agencies and any individual or group seeking help with an energy saving project. What makes the clearinghouse unique is that it will offer personalized, step by step assistance in providing all the information needed to tackle an energy saving project, including guidance to identify potential funding and help understanding permitting regulations.

Ms. Cookson will walk through all the

steps with interested parties — ensuring all questions are answered and the path to success is fully understood. Objective, personal service is rare in the often-complicated energy marketplace and is part of the motivation for the program.

In addition to its own research, the clearinghouse will draw on the new findings and data put together by the Rhode Island Renewable Energy Siting Partnership and the Statewide Planning Program Energy Plan.

If the Energy Clearinghouse project becomes a reality through new grant funding, it will provide Aquidneck Island with one-stop shopping for interested parties as they wade through myriad data, price estimates, potential project effects and energy saving calculations as needed. Such a resource will help take the bite out of winter's energy budgets, while distinguishing Aquidneck Island as an innovator in energy conservation.

Tina Dolen, executive director, Aquidneck Island Planning Commission