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# Burlington City church goes solar

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By Dennis Mc Donald BCT staff photographer

Fred Ham, Chairman of the Tabernacle Baptist Church Board of Trustees, walks among the array of solar panels installed on the roofs of the various buildings at the Burlington City church.



Posted: Wednesday, January 18, 2012 5:00 am | Updated: 8:30 am, Wed Jan 18, 2012.

By Jeannie O'Sullivan Staff writer | 0 comments

**BURLINGTON CITY** — An 88-year-old church is pursuing a modern energy initiative to save money and go green.

Work is nearly halfway complete on the installation of rooftop solar panels at the Tabernacle Baptist Church on East Second Street. Church officials expect the system to begin operating in the middle of February.

Three companies were considered before officials settled on Horizon Solar Energy in Edgewater Park, said Fred Ham, chairman of the church's board of trustees.

"The whole world is talking about going green. So we did some research," said Ham, adding that church members will host a ceremony marking the moment they "flip the switch."

The panels will generate 399,806 kilowatt hours of clean power annually and more than 78.1 million kilowatts over 20 years, according to company literature.

The system will provide 80 percent of the energy used by the member-supported church and cut utility costs by about 60 percent to 44 cents per kilowatt, down from 27

Monthly energy costs generated by the church, which has a sanctuary, auditorium, kitchen, gymnasium and classrooms, typically range from \$8,000 to \$11,000, he said.

The estimated savings in the first year amount to \$27,126.

Another break came from Horizon's financial package, which has no upfront costs, according to Ham. Horizon, in conjunction with a Hamilton investor, Future Renewable Energy Enterprises, entered into a power-purchase agreement to lease the rooftop space for 20 years.



## Jeannie O'Sullivan

Burlington County Times Reporter  
phillyBurbs.com

E-mail: josullivan@phillyburbs.com

Jeannie O'Sullivan is the Burlington County Times reporter who covers Burlington City, Burlington Township, Beverly, Edgewater Park, Florence, Bordentown City, Bordentown Township, Fieldsboro, Chesterfield and Mansfield. She's also an avid runner, film fanatic and food enthusiast who loves to cook...and eat.

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Jeannie O'Sullivan

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"A large amount of (these savings) are going toward the church's soup kitchen, which feeds about 250 people

per week," Ham said.

Tabernacle's solar power system will help advance the city green team's pursuit of certification by Sustainable Jersey, a program that helps municipalities implement environmentally friendly initiatives. Participating towns receive tools and guidance for creating a sustainable community, get priority access and notification of incentives and grants, and are eligible for the Sustainable Jersey Small Grants Program, which funds \$220,000 worth of projects annually across the state.

Sustainable Jersey requires towns to form green teams and submit documentation of sustainability initiatives relating to energy efficiency, health and wellness, land use, building design and more to achieve point-based certification levels.

City officials in July announced that a green team was forming.

Jeannie O'Sullivan: 609-871-8068;

email: josullivan@phillyBurbs.com;

Twitter: @jeannieosulliva

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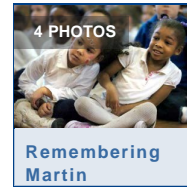
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