

[Archives](#)[Home](#)[Saved Search](#)[Logout](#)[Search Tips](#)[FAQ](#)[Pricing](#)[My Account](#)[Help](#)[About the Archive](#)[Terms](#)**Document**

Basic

Advanced

Saved

Page Prints

Help

Start a New Search

**Other Formats:**[Abstract](#)[Full Text](#)[Page Print](#)[Printer Friendly](#)**Backyard wind power**

Argus Leader - Sioux Falls, S.D.

Author: Cody Winchester

Date: May 5, 2011

Start Page: n/a

Section: NEWS

Text Word Count: 857

**Document Text**

Charlie Cross' 3,300-square-foot home is situated in a suburban wind corridor on the southern end of Brandon - the perfect spot, he says, to erect a small wind turbine to juice his power supply.

Right now, though, he's out of luck. Although the city allows conditional-use permits for wind turbines for industry, it doesn't allow them in residential areas.

That could change. Cross is working with Robert Westall of Cleaner, Greener Energies in Sioux Falls to present a sample small-wind ordinance to Brandon's planning and zoning commission today.

From there, the city will hold another public information meeting May 19, after which the city council will take up the issue, said David Swier, Brandon's building inspector. If the ordinance passes, Brandon residents could erect turbines at their homes after obtaining a conditional-use permit.

Cross and his plans for future energy sources represents a growing interest in residential wind energy. Even state officials are trying to make it easier.

But some Brandon residents are worried that unsightly turbines would begin popping up all over town, Swier said. Others have safety concerns.

All of this will be addressed during the review process, Cross said.

"Bottom line, this stuff works," he said. "The time is now."

South Dakota Public Utilities Commission Chairman Steve Kolbeck estimates that only a few dozen cities in the state have small-wind ordinances. Hoping to boost that number, the commission last year introduced the Small Renewable Energy Initiative to make it easier for energy consumers to become producers.

The initiative mostly deals with tax and interconnection policies, Kolbeck said, but the commission also supplies a model ordinance for local governments to borrow from, if they so choose.

This was not the case in Brandon, Swier said.

"What we did was researched three or four other communities to see what was out there," he said.

If it does adopt the ordinance, Brandon would be among a small handful of communities in the state to have embraced policies that encourage distributed generation, in which energy is used where it's produced.

Cross is something of an evangelist when it comes to distributed generation, and his vision is ambitious: a network of neighborhood power collectives, each home on the block generating surplus electricity to sell back to the utility.

The turbine Cross wants to put on his back deck is 46 inches wide and would sit on a pole 15 feet to 20 feet tall. It's engineered to reduce noise and would be painted to match his exterior decor, he said. His neighborhood does not have homeowner covenants.

The anemometer tower on Cross' deck was registering a wind speed of 11 miles an hour on a recent afternoon. That's about average, he said, and it's enough to supply 200 to 400 watts of power to his home, which already is a paragon of energy efficiency.

The retired Air Force pilot has a 4,200-watt photovoltaic solar system on his roof and a geothermal pump in the basement, and he's begun using natural gas to power his energy-sucking appliances.

The PUC sent a delegation to tour his home. Sioux Valley Energy, which supplies power to Brandon, tracks his energy use.

"I've probably got the most energy-efficient house in the state," he said. Since installing these efficiency measures in September, he has seen his monthly utility bills fall by half.

Sioux Valley Energy is planning to bump its residential rates by 7.6 percent this month - one more reason to seek independence from the grid, Cross said.

Although the initial cost of these improvements was steep - his rooftop photovoltaic system, for example, cost about \$38,000 minus 30 percent from a federal tax credit - it's a more sensible home-improvement project than a pool or an extra room, he said. He's confident that small wind and solar efforts will catch on once local governments understand the benefits.

"If you write the ordinance correctly, and you put in the restrictions and good, reasonable expectations, then you're going to have a good residential wind program," he said.

Reach Cody Winchester at 331-2320.