

Oxford starting energy assessment

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OXFORD — Town officials will examine the possibility of forming an energy independence district similar to what Ansonia is embarking on to reduce power costs and attract more business to the town.

The Board of Selectmen voted Wednesday to allow Pareto Energy of Washington, D.C., to do an initial assessment of the town to examine creating an energy independence district. The assessment is free, said Economic Development Director Herman Schuler. The town would have to pay Pareto about \$50,000 should it decide to have the firm create a more in-depth feasibility study, Schuler said. Flank Shalom, a chief technical officer for Pareto, said the company will examine the town's current infrastructure, new sources of energy and economic development. Sources being reviewed include the planned power plant that will be constructed by General Electric Energy Financial Services. "This is the first step down the EID road," Shalom said. "It's a quick look-around to see if there's something that's going to be beneficial to the town."

Shalom said the first phase in a six-part creation process will take between 30 and 60 days. Because of Oxford's rural makeup, the energy district may only serve municipal buildings, the industrial area and land near the Waterbury-Oxford Airport, Shalom said.

"We'll look at it. We look forward to touring it," Shalom said. The town became interested after Ansonia started the process last year of establishing the state's first energy improvement district and building an intra-city micro-grid that is supposed to reduce energy costs. The city recently established an Energy Improvement District Commission comprised of members of the Board of Aldermen and city business managers. Pareto is assisting Ansonia in its EID creation. First Selectman Mary Ann Drayton-Rogers said it makes sense to see if establishing such a district is worth it. "We want to look at all the opportunities that will help us" in attracting business and saving money, Drayton-Rogers said. Selectman August Palmer III voted against the measure, saying Town Counsel Francis Toodosio should have reviewed the contract before the town agreed to work with Pareto. But Selectman Dave McKane said the town could opt out at any time and can stop if it doesn't like the deal. "It doesn't cost us anything else going forward," McKane said. "If it shows that we'll be better for it, we'll look into it." Melvin Mason, who covers the Naugatuck Valley, can be reached at 736-5440.

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