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## Town hall session attracts two dozen

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ESCANABA — More than two dozen people attended the Escanaba town hall meeting Wednesday when the city's power plant and power supply options were discussed by administration, council members and the public.

"I think it went well," said City Manager Jim O'Toole after the town hall meeting, a new concept recently adopted by council. "It gave us a great opportunity to bring everybody up to speed and show the various options being researched and show where we've been and where we're going."

For several years, officials have been looking ahead to how the city will meet increasing electrical demand. Several studies have been conducted, including the feasibility of building a new power plant. That idea is not economical mainly because of construction costs and lack of interested partners.

Officials are now exploring various options of buying some or all of the city's energy from an electric supplier. Another option in the mix is to convert the existing plant to produce power using biomass fuel such as wood chips.

The biofuel option fits into Gov. Jennifer Granholm's intent to pass a law requiring 10 percent of the state's energy come from alternative energy by 2015 and 25 percent by 2025, O'Toole said.

"We're thinking outside the box," he said, giving examples of other options the city is looking into besides biofuel: gasification is creating energy by burning waste such as tires; and co-generation which makes energy from other sources such as burning the fly ash left over from burning coal.

"We're looking under every stone to see what can be done," O'Toole told those in attendance. "The approach here is the process of elimination... Our job is to give the facts to you and then make a decision as a community."

Electric Superintendent Mike Furmanski gave a PowerPoint presentation on the past, present and possible future of the city's power. (See related story.) At this point, he said, city officials will meet with two power supply companies which submitted power purchase proposals. The two also said they were interested in purchasing power from Escanaba produced with biofuel.

The expanded proposals from these two regional power suppliers will be presented to the city's Electrical Advisory Committee and the community in April, Furmanski said. Other options under consideration will also be presented, he said.

Following the presentation, the public was invited to comment or ask questions. (See related story.)

### Article Photos



### Fact Box

Why does Escanaba need a new energy supply plan?

- The city is facing high electric costs related to high fuel costs.
- The city's existing facility is 50 years old.
- The city must plan for future growth.
- The city needs to provide competitive and reliable electricity to its customers.

Source: Electric Superintendent Mike Furmanski

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