

Sorg's renewable energy proposal makes sense for Las Cruces

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This seems like a no-brainer: we live in the southern part of the second sunniest state in the United States; fossil fuels are costly, and grow more so, and have undesirable environmental consequences; why wouldn't the city of Las Cruces, which now uses 6.5% renewable energy, resolve to increase that to at least 25% by 2022?

Albuquerque has resolved to reach at least 25% renewable energy by 2025, and will offer incentive programs for homes and offices to invest in solar panels.

City Councilor Gill Sorg has introduced an ordinance that would commit the city to the "25% by 2022" goal. (That's three years earlier than Albuquerque because we're starting from a higher percentage; and because we're better than Albuquerque.) By 2050, we should approach 100% renewable energy. With 300 days of sunshine per year, it sounds feasible. U.S. Senator Martin Heinrich has called these "attainable goals," adding that "Many of New Mexico's communities are leading the nation in solar deployment" and that "the solar industry added 1,000 jobs in 2016 alone."

More than 30 Las Cruces-owned businesses have signed up to support this, and a petition campaign is garnering plenty of signatures.

The draft resolution notes that producing a kilowatt-hour of energy from solar energy takes about "one-ninth the water it takes to produce that kilowatt-hour from a combined cycle fossil gas plant, and 1/17 as much as from a coal-fired plant."

Last time I looked, we live in a desert. With no clear end to our current "drought" (actually, normal here) and every likelihood of ongoing water shortages. I've rarely seen the Rio flowing in recent years. Meanwhile, the folks who grow those mammoth waterhogs called pecan trees keep planting, and have announced a humongous national marketing campaign! Too, people keep screaming about "economic development," which means more people and more businesses lapping up our dwindling water supply.

What part of "We should do all we can to conserve water!" does anyone not understand?

The draft resolution notes that "the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change reported with 95% certainty that anthropogenic carbon pollution is causing global temperatures to rise, exacerbating extreme weather events such as droughts, floods, and wildfires."

I understand that a small minority of us still doubt global warming is occurring and/or doubt human activities are contributing to it; but no one could contend that burning fossil fuels is somehow wonderful for us. (Ever noticed all those warnings on gas pumps about pregnant women?) Unless one had a fistful of stock in a fossil-fuel corporation, who'd argue that using more solar, more wind-power, and less fossil fuel would somehow harm us – even if the tiny minority were right that the signs of global warming are illusory or fake news?

If your doctors agreed that there was a 95% certainty you had cancer, would you say it was just normal growth (or a plot) and go fishing rather than get treatment? What if the treatment was something independently good for you?

The resolution's non-binding; but it's fair to ask how feasible this really is. One knowledgeable city official says it's "totally doable" but would cost money. (Even tariff issues may complicate things.) City lawyers and legislative analysts are looking at financing options and legal issues. Much depends on what financing arrangements are available – and on the council's political will.

It's time to act. Particularly with national efforts temporarily stalled, we need to do our part.