

COMMENTARY

The
Sunday Hour

The Hour

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Coast Guard takes the lead in using water for power

We have often made a case for the expansion of hydropower, using water to generate electricity — probably to the distraction of some. Like it or not, it's a viable source of energy here in the Northeast. No, it won't end our reliance on imported oil or natural gas, but it is available, is renewable and doesn't pollute.

There have been some efforts at turning to hydropower developing recently in this state, both private and public. They are small, to be sure, and are designed to supply a specific users.

Northeast Utilities still relies on water to provide power to some New England customers. The utility operates 27 run-of-river conventional hydropower generating facilities in the six-state area.

Not your usual perception of hydroelectric power that conjures up visions of Hoover Dam in the West, there is an interesting operation in Colebrook. There, six turbine generators are lowered by crane to position in front of the intake conduits of Colebrook River Lake. The turbines generate 7.5 megawatts of power annually that are sold to the Connecticut Light & Power Co. and are operated by the Metropolitan District Commission of Hartford.

A new development concerning using power as a generation source comes not from the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission but from the U.S. Coast Guard.

The Coast Guard plans to use tidal water to generate power for its station in Eastport, Maine. The proposal would use Eastport's 20-foot tides and 6-knot current to turn its generator. The tidal turbines turn generators in much the same way wind turbines do. There is a bonus in that the tidal change is more reliable than the wind currents. The Coast Guard already has wind turbines in Maine at Southwest Harbor and Portland. Most lighted navigational buoys offshore are powered by solar panels.

The Coast Guard hopes to use this project as a model for many of its stations in Alaska and Washington state.

For us, it could be a demonstration of ways to use the tidal drop at Passamaquoddy Bay. An inlet of the bay will power the Coast Guard facilities.

Beyond Passamaquoddy, with its huge tidal swings — the largest in the continental United States — the Bay of Fundy north of the border, with its 40-foot tidal drops could provide an enormous source of energy.

In addition to its reliability, tidal power is predictable. Capt. James McPherson, commander of the Coast Guard's New England sector, put it well — "Tidal power is very predictable; it comes twice a day. We can time it to the minute."

The potential is enticing, indeed.



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Change Norwalk can believe in

To the Editor

On April 3, NEF participated in a conference call with the U.S. Department of Education along with 18 local education foundations representing public education students in 14 states.

A clear message sent was that the education stimulus funding must be used to supplement, and not to supplant or replace budget items that had traditionally been part of the education budget. The danger is that superintendents and school boards will look for loopholes and waivers, rather than new ideas and sustainable reform.

To quote Secretary Duncan in a March 23 Dallas Morning News op-ed, "this means raising the quality of early childhood programs; ending state caps on the number of allowable charter schools; rewarding good teachers and removing bad ones; adding learning time to the school year; and putting the dream of a college degree within reach for anyone who wants one."

We are demanding absolute transparency for every tax dollar spent and we will use the power of the bully pulpit and the power of the purse to reward what is working and to reform what is not."

For Norwalk schools, this means that by accepting an additional \$1.2 million in Title I and \$2.3 million in IDEA (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act) funding, and then doing the same old thing, may be construed as using these funds to supplant the school budget instead of supplement it. This may be why some states have opted not to accept this funding.

To quote Secretary Duncan

ANOTHER VIEW

Lauren Rosato

again, "If all we do is perpetuate the status quo, we will miss this historic opportunity. That's why states that are accepting funding from the Recovery Act must commit to making four reforms. They must:

- Adopt internationally benchmarked standards and assessments that better prepare students for college and a career. Today, some states intentionally lower standards, essentially lying to kids by telling them they are ready for college when they are not.

- Build high-quality data systems that track a student's academic career, making it possible to tell which teachers, programs and schools are effective. Better data can foster a shared understanding among educators and parents about what is necessary to improve a child's education, creating, as President Obama said, "a culture of accountability."

- Recruit more high-quality educators to underperforming schools as well as to subjects like math and science. If recruiting teachers and principals to the schools and subjects that need them most means offering them extra pay, we should provide it.

- Support effective strategies to turn around underperforming schools. Closing failing schools and replacing staff is tough medicine, but the alternative is unacceptable.

States with the most comprehensive and cutting-edge reform plans can also win a share of a \$5 billion 'Race to the Top' fund — a portion of which will go directly to

districts and non-profits that are achieving results."

NEF would like to challenge us to embrace this historic opportunity for true education reform in Norwalk public schools. Together with parents, teachers, administrators, and community partners, a journey has already begun in areas that align with several of these goals: quality early childhood and extended learning programs, student data tracking and analysis, improved teacher quality, and innovative classroom instruction. If this work is continued through the use of stimulus funding, Norwalk schools can build upon it and qualify as a "Race to the Top" district with the help of so many of its incredible community partners.

The will exists and the President of the United States is leading the charge. This is an historic opportunity to do what we know must be done, but may have been afraid to do up until now: change the status quo.

The President says it best: "Change will not come if we wait for some other person or some other time. We are the ones we've been waiting for. We are the change that we seek."

For more information on the education stimulus funding, visit www.ed.gov.

Lauren Rosato
Executive Director
Norwalk Education Foundation

Norwalk Education Foundation is an independent nonprofit organization committed to quality education for all of Norwalk's children.

Dorr Way to Health thanked for fundraiser at private home

To the Editor:

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Gail Cerrick and Laura Dorr of Dorr Way to Health for sponsoring a fundraiser at my home.

The purpose of the fundraiser was to raise funds for Norwalk Hospital Circle of Caring. Circle of Caring was created to provide a "way to give back" and ensure that the level of medical and emotional care and support continues at Norwalk Hospital.

It was in the spirit of giving back that Amy Schafrann, mother of a former patient of Norwalk

Hospital, helped pioneer the program. The Norwalk Hospital Circle of Caring is designed to encourage former patients and their families to become more involved with the hospital and to express their gratitude for the exceptional care they or a loved one received.

The support helps the hospital attract and retain outstanding medical staff and keep pace with the rapid advances in medical technology while providing compassionate, patient-centered care that all patients expect and deserve. Laura and Gail showed us how to cook a healthy meal that required

minimal time and effort. They also showed us how to shop for foods that were healthy and delicious. I never thought healthy cooking could be so scrumptious and easy.

Dorr Way to Health, located in Norwalk, offers a full range of ways to become healthier. Thanks to all of you who attend and special thanks to Laura and Gail. It was truly a memorable evening.

Kathy McShane,
co-chairman
Norwalk Hospital Circle of Caring

Defunding position at South Norwalk Library displeasing

To the Editor:

The recent vote of the library board to defund the position of branch manager at the South Norwalk Branch Library is unfortunate, displeasing and scandalous. There are other ways to save money.

1. Eliminate the position of Assistant Librarian at the main library. With the elevation of the present assistant to the post of library director, this action will hurt no one. The post of assistant was instituted in 1999 when the current, about to be retired, director asked for it. The newly appointed director can certainly call upon any one of the more than 10 MLS librarians already on the staff of the main library to assist him. (South Norwalk has only two MLS librarians, the director and the head of the Children's

Department.)

2. Modest reductions can be made in the book and magazine budgets. Everywhere patrons are reading less and computing more.

3. Encourage the use of volunteers. The union presumably will not like this suggestion, but the union will probably not like the elimination of a supervisory post.

4. Offer some paid services. The library staff can be of service in the preparation of passport applications, for example.

5. Temporarily allocate gifts from the Friends of the Library to operation expenses rather than to capital improvements.

The city of Norwalk has invested heavily, approximately \$5,000,000 in the renovation of the South Norwalk Library. This well-loved landmark deserves the city's continued care and preserva-

tion.

The present director of the South Norwalk Library is eminently qualified to continue to serve. Reginald S. Fort is the epitome of the ideal leader in the SoNo community. He is tri-lingual, French, English and Creole. He has created and maintained an atmosphere of warmth, friendliness and compassion. He is an active advocate for the mission of his Library.

The South Norwalk Library is my favorite place in South Norwalk. It is the principal service I receive in exchange for my \$8,000 in annual property taxes. I find the decision to defund the position of director ill-conceived and highly regrettable.

Joan Miano Joakim
Norwalk