

The Greening of a Municipality

by Donald N. Briggs, Mayor of Emmitsburg, LEED AP+



Four years ago I was elected Mayor of Emmitsburg. Four years ago the town government of Emmitsburg faced not only the typical rising operating costs, but also the additional building and operating of a \$15.5 million State mandated waste water treatment plant (WWTP). "Greening," is shorthand for "Sustainability". For a town, sustainability is what it has to do to position itself to compete as a viable attractive and durable place to live - good for grandchildren. We only have to look at the "Rust belt" states to see examples of what can happen to communities that have lost their futures. For Emmitsburg, sustainability means embarking on investing \$30+ million in improvements. Overcoming challenges at every turn, the virtue was persistence. Persistence in finding and providing funds to enhance roads and walkway connectivity, for revitalizing and making a more pedestrian friendly Downtown Square, providing improvement grants for Historic District property owners, attracting new businesses,

improving recreation facilities and opportunities, building a multi-purpose pathway connecting Mount Saint Mary's University to the town and converting to high performance energy costs standardization. In four years, we are about three quarters of the way there and hope to complete by the end of 2017.



Converting to high performance energy costs standardization, as it turns out, was the "low hanging fruit". It was a common sense choice. The answer was easy, convert to renewable solar energy and replace 330 street lights with high efficiency LED lighting. Over the last two years, the use of LED lights has decreased street lighting expense 30+%



for virtually no investment through grants and rebates. After months of due diligence, the town selected a \$4+ million 2mW solar energy system power payment agreement (PPA) with investors, from which the town will benefit from lower cost of energy for many years. With the new WWTP now on line, Emmitsburg expects to produce over 94% of government electrical needs from renewable solar energy while not competing with its residents for electricity and at the same time contributing to the preservation of the environment.

I hope this makes our grandchildren happy.

