Residents with solar could see new charge

By David DeMille

ST. GEORGE — Falling costs have encouraged many homeowners in St. George to go green, but some of the associated costs to the city’s municipal power utility could result in a new fee for those trying to go green.

The city council gave verbal approval Thursday to the idea of imposing a capacity fee for solar installations, aiming to offset funding issues that managers say have developed out of the city’s “net metering” program, which requires the city to purchase any existing power that homeowners generate but can’t use themselves.

Sixty-three of the some 20,000 customers on St. George’s grid have solar systems installed, but they can generate about a megawatt of power between them, enough to raise concerns about whether the net metering program pays as much for the solar-produced power as it should.

According to the National Renewable Energy Laboratory, the purchasing solar panels on the typical American house has fallen some 70 percent over the past decade. St. George officials say their costs for the solar-produced power, creating what they call a “credit imbalance,” has fallen 70 percent over the past decade.

The recommended a monthly capacity charge that would increase incremental-ly based on system size, although no set dollar amount had been figured.

Fleming said and would take a 3- to 6-month analysis to come up with the amount based on system size.

People with solar systems on their homes within the city typically stay connected to other customers.

Additionally, other customers who don’t have solar could get back solar-generated power, leading to the idea of imposing a capacity fee.

Some residents in attendance questioned whether an additional charge would take into account various benefits provided by solar, and whether the city should be making a move that could possibly be too disincentive for residents to install solar.

Fleming said interest in solar would likely be picking up regardless because of declining costs.

Heather Layton, 6th annual conference is cur-

Mountain Heights Academy student Asher Layton was recently awarded a scholarship from the Institute for the Study of Knowledge Management in Education to attend the Big Ideas Fest in San Francisco for his GoPro video, “Water in the Desert: The Effects of Extreme Weather on Southern Utah.”

The 6th annual conference is currently at the Ritz Carlton in San Francisco through Dec. 10.

Layton’s “GoPro Challenge Curriculum,” which she began implementing in her classroom earlier this year as a tool for students to document how national issues affect the people and landscape in this region.

The video has since been awarded a national scholarship to attend the conference and a national level.

Water in the Desert: The Effects of Extreme Weather on Southern Utah."

The 6th annual conference is currently at the Ritz Carlton in San Francisco through Dec. 10.

Layton’s "GoPro Challenge Curriculum," which she began implementing in her classroom earlier this year as a tool for students to document how national issues affect the people and landscape in this region.

Water in the Desert: The Effects of Extreme Weather on Southern Utah.

The video has since been awarded a national scholarship to attend the conference and a national level.