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Lincoln-Sudbury school board moves forward with solar plan

Board votes to negotiate contract with company

Scott O'Connell Daily News Staff

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SUDBURY - The Lincoln-Sudbury school board will move forward with the district's proposed solar parking lot cover, two weeks after the firm preparing the project presented a new plan to replace an earlier model that would have not have worked.

Committee chairman Radha Gargeya said the board voted Tuesday night to negotiate an amended contract with SunEdison, which would build and maintain the canopy for free in exchange for the district's commitment to buy electricity from the system over the next 20 years.

While the Missouri company had to scrap an earlier version of the proposal because of some miscalculations it made, Gargeya said committee members "have confidence this new model will work." They are bolstered in particular by an independent consulting group's analysis of the revamped plan that, while not as optimistic as SunEdison's projections, still shows L-S saving \$2 million in energy costs over the life of the contract.

Pending the signing of an agreement and SunEdison's obtaining the necessary permits for the project, Gargeya said the hope is to start construction this summer. The panels would be built over the school's main parking lot in rows.

L-S would be the first public school in the region to have a solar canopy, which Gargeya said "is why we've taken the time to make sure the project is designed well." The school board has also interviewed other customers of SunEdison, and came away with confidence the company would be a good partner on the project, he said.

But one of the key aspects in the contract the sides must negotiate over the next few weeks is the district's opt-out rights in case the system doesn't perform as advertised. Gargeya

said the company is obligated, for example, to have the solar cover produce at least 90 percent of the output SunEdison has estimated.

More information about the project is available on the school committee's page on the district's website at www.lsrhs.net.

Scott O'Connell can be reached at 508-626-4449 or soconnell@wickedlocal.com. Follow him on Twitter: [@ScottOConnellMW](https://twitter.com/ScottOConnellMW)