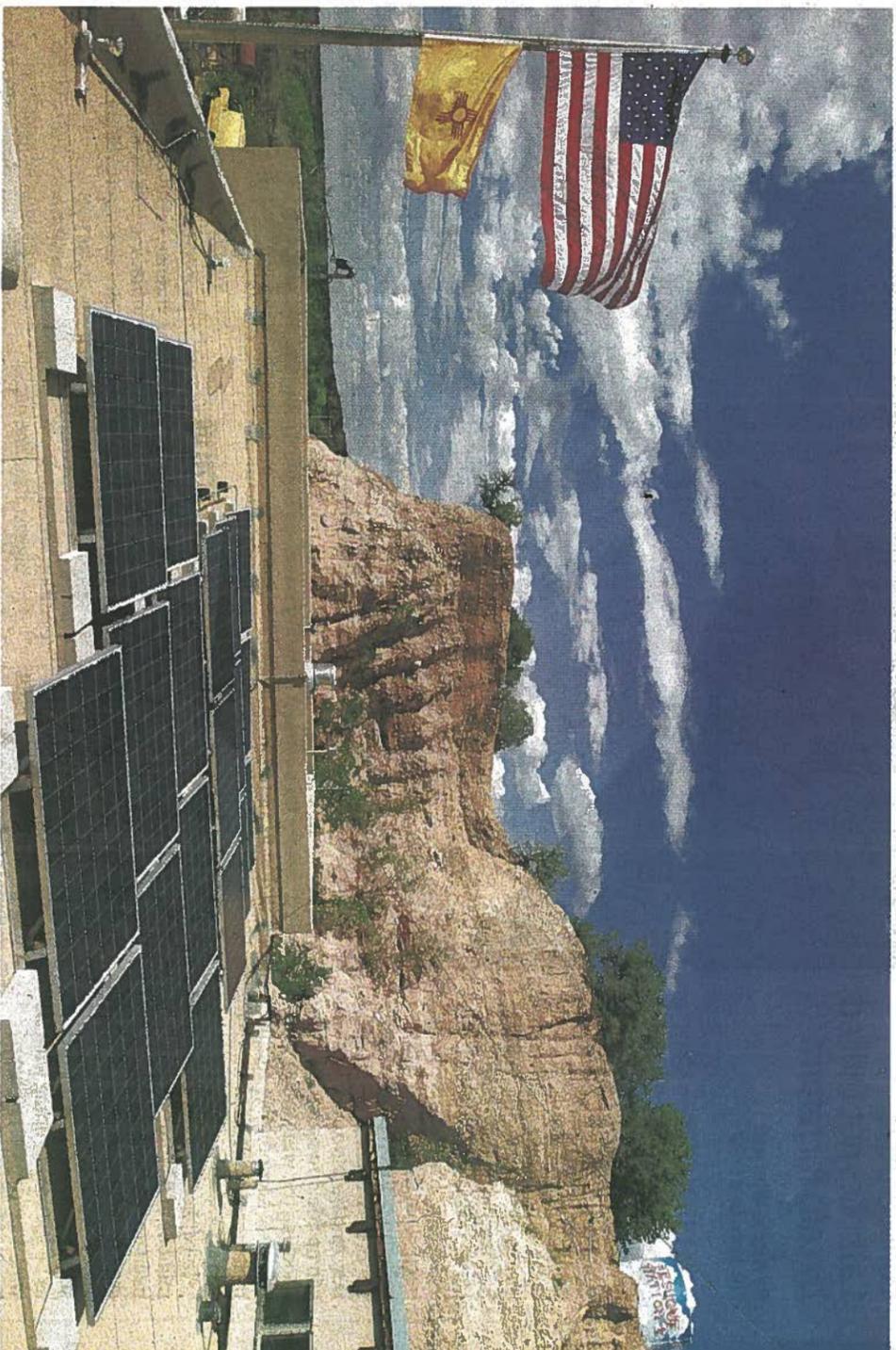


LOCAL NEWS



The Tesuque Fire and Rescue Station is the first Santa Fe County solar-powered firehouse. Officials celebrated the newly installed solar panels with a community picnic Wednesday. PHOTOS BY JANE PHILLIPS/THE NEW MEXICAN

Run by the sun

7/31/13

Tesuque Fire and Rescue Station fires up new solar panel system

By David Salazar
The New Mexican

Tesuque-area residents, volunteer firefighters, solar energy advocates and Santa Fe County officials on Wednesday evening celebrated the completion of a solar installation project at the Tesuque Fire and Rescue Station — the first county firehouse with solar power.

The \$18,900, 6.1-kilowatt solar panel system, a project that began in May, was half-funded by the county under a May resolution sponsored by County Commissioners Robert Anaya and Danny Mayfield. The rest of the money for the project came from the nonprofit New Energy Economy as part of its “Sol not Coal” campaign, which works to bring solar panels to area buildings through community donations.

“What we’ve done is fundraise from our community, and a number of businesses were involved,” said Maribel Nanasi, New Energy Economy’s executive director. “One of the ways that we fund-raised was to have a table outside La Montanita Co-op — and these are dimes and nickels and checks helping to raise the money.”

Powered entirely by energy from the solar panels during the day, the Tesuque firehouse will

send excess power back into the Public Service Company of New Mexico grid during the day, and take power from the grid at night.

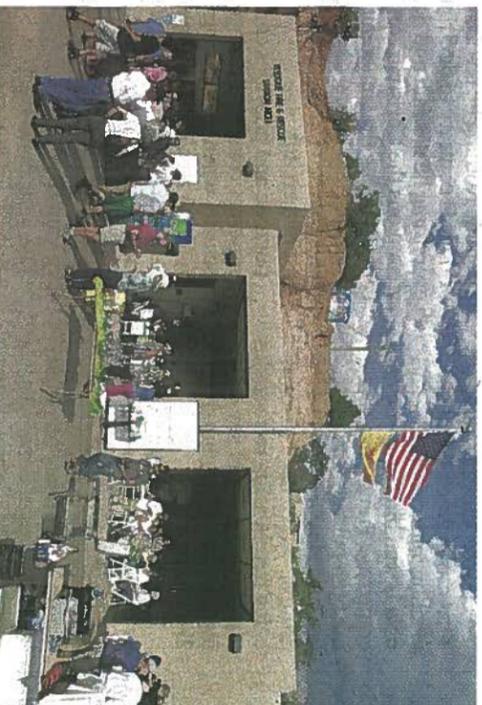
“The electric meter spins backward, delivering power onto the grid and to people in the vicinity,” said Craig O’Hare, the county’s energy specialist. O’Hare said the firehouse will receive a monthly payment from PNM for about \$20, and the county will save \$1,500 per year on energy costs because of the solar panels.

The firehouse isn’t the first county building to soak up energy from the sun, and O’Hare said more will come. Currently, the Judge Steve Herrera Judicial Complex has a 113-kilowatt solar power system, which cost about \$350,000 as part of the \$63 million courthouse construction budget and provides about 20 percent of its electricity.

Several city government buildings also have solar panels, including the Genovera Chavez Community Center and Fire Station No. 3 on Cerrillos Road, which had its solar panel system installed with help from New Energy Economy.

New Energy Economy is dedicated to garnering local support for a local industry. A crew from Consolidated Solar Technologies, an Albuquerque and Las Cruces firm that opened a Santa Fe office this week, installed the Tesuque fire station’s solar panels.

“We like it a whole lot because we’re reinvesting in our community,” Nanasi said. “We’re showing that this is a cost-effective way to protect the climate and reduce bills in a way that is aligned with



Tesuque residents, county officials and others celebrated the startup of the new solar power system for the firehouse.

the values of Santa Feans.” Another group dedicated to improving the community, the Tesuque Valley Community Association, was also on hand Wednesday night, providing hamburgers, hot dogs and other food to dozens of attendees.

“We’re building community, we’re out here meeting people,” TVCA co-secretary Mary Currier said while encouraging people to sign up for a \$10 annual membership. “We also have supported the fire station and its volunteers in the past.”

Delaney Corvelli, a recent Santa Fe High School graduate and an intern at New Energy Economy, said the Tesuque project is a step in the right direction at a critical time in the U.S. in terms of its energy sources. She believes in solar power, she said, “because I think that for our generation,

using things like solar power and working toward renewable energy means survival.”

Five years ago, O’Hare said, solar installation was twice the cost it is now, and federal and state tax credits also help the cost of a solar-powered home or business easier to bear.

“I like to say that solar power is 40 percent off, all the time,” O’Hare said, referring to tax credits given to those who install solar power — a 30 percent tax credit from the federal government and 10 percent from the state.

With the promise of solar energy in New Mexico, O’Hare said, “this is just the beginning of putting more solar on county facilities.”

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