



## Providence

[Comments](#) 0 | [Recommend](#) 0

# Council mulls energy czar for the city

01:00 AM EDT on Friday, September 19, 2008

By Daniel Barbarisi

Journal Staff Writer

PROVIDENCE — Saving energy and being green is on everyone's lips lately; now, Providence wants to put its money where its mouth is and hire an energy manager to knock down the city's energy consumption.

Councilman Seth Yurdin has proposed creating the new position of energy manager. The energy manager would have the status of a department director, and would pull in an annual salary of about \$70,000.

Yurdin acknowledged that creating the position comes with the risk that it could be filled with an unqualified political hire. To ensure that the city gets a qualified candidate, the manager would have to have a degree in environmental science, resource management, or public administration, and at least five years experience in energy management.

The manager's effectiveness could also be easily measured, Yurdin said. If after a year or two, energy use does not decline, then perhaps the city would be better off without the position. The manager would be required to make biannual reports to the City Council.

"The good thing is that it can be concretely measured against the general energy expenditures of the city," Yurdin said.

The city spends \$14 million each year on energy, Yurdin said.

It would be a bargain, Yurdin said, if the manager cut the city's energy consumption by even 1 percent — \$140,000. What they hope for, however, is a higher reduction, perhaps 5 percent, for a savings of \$700,000, or twice that.

When the ordinance was introduced at last night's City Council meeting, several council members jumped to co-sponsor it, indicating it may have the support to pass.

Environmentalists cheered the move.

"Appointing a full-time employee to review and manage the city's efforts to reduce its carbon footprint is a big step in the right direction," said Sheila Dormody, director of Clean Water Action in Rhode Island.

The council also waded into the national energy predicament last night, passing a resolution urging Congress

to adopt Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid's "Stop Excessive Energy Speculation Act of 2008."

The act seeks to increase federal regulatory powers, so that domestic and foreign investors would have less ability to drive up the prices of energy resources in the United States.

The bill would "eliminate excessive energy commodities speculation and put money back in the wallets of the hardworking people here in Rhode Island and around the country who are hurting because of fuel costs," said the resolution's sponsor, Councilman Miguel Luna.

The council last night also reauthorized the League of Cities and Towns to purchase electricity for the city in conjunction with other cities and towns across the state. Council Majority Leader Terrence M. Hassett said that the city has saved millions of dollars since 2005 by combining its purchasing power with other municipalities through the league.

[dbarbari@projo.com](mailto:dbarbari@projo.com)