

Breaking News

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JAMES RAMOS
Third District Supervisor

Supervisor's Solar Options Expo Puts Focus on Rooftop Systems

JOSHUA TREE-APRIL 26, 2014: Nearly 200 area residents turned out on Saturday to meet face to face with solar industry professionals. It wasn't opposition to a large-scale solar development that attracted so many. This time it was County Supervisor James Ramos' support for rooftop, or distributed, point-of-use power generation.

Saturday's "Solar Options for Homeowners Expo" brought area property owners together with solar power companies, contractors, installers, consultants, and lenders from the new HERO, or Home Energy Renovation Opportunity, program. Activity was brisk as home owners worked their way around the room asking questions, gathering information, and comparing the features of various lease and purchase programs.

Ramos' staff were on hand answering questions and helping to match residents with the specialists best suited for them. Representatives from Southern California Edison were there to explain their role in the mix, and property owners crowded around the HERO table to be pre-qualified for financing on the spot.

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Many consumers remain unaware of changes in the market. The price of photovoltaic panels has been steadily dropping, while their efficiency continues to improve. New purchase and lease options as well as financing alternatives like HERO put rooftop solar within reach of working families. For some, tax write offs and other incentives make switching to solar less costly than doing nothing.

Heightened interest in desert land from developers and speculators has pushed the Third District Supervisor out in front of the issue. In talking to constituents, he explains the importance of getting more panels on residential rooftops because the alternative, he says "is a patchwork of industrial-scale solar fields across the desert floor." A scenario Ramos calls "simply unacceptable."

His message appears to be picking up traction. Vendors were extremely encouraged by the public's interest in the Solar Options event. The Basin's two highest volume residential solar contractors, Mark Heinz of Solar Now in Yucca Valley, and John Wilson of Ambassador Energy out of Twentynine Palms, agreed that Saturday's Expo was among the best they had attended.

Ken Conway was there representing HERO. He traveled from San Diego to explain the program to people here. As activity wound down, Conway disclosed he had pre-qualified close to 75 home owners for HERO financing at the Expo; his largest single day ever.

Bolstered by the enthusiastic public response and apparent commercial success, Supervisor Ramos is considering other communities in the Third District that would benefit from a "Solar Options" program.

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