

News and Information from the Salem Observer

Sununu meets with middle schooler to discuss alternative energy use for Windham High School

BY JIM DEVINE

A 13-year-old boy who is pushing to install solar and wind alternative energy sources at the new Windham high school has added a U.S. senator to the list of officials taking interest.

Sen. John Sununu met with David Hutchings on Monday, April 21, to hear more about the boy's suggestion and thoughts on renewable energy.

"It's pretty cool," Hutchings said after the meeting. "I think it's going to happen."

After writing to New Hampshire's junior senator, Hutchings was quick to receive a reply from Sununu, who took interest in the teenager's proposal.

"I'm so grateful he responded," Hutchings' mother Michelle said. "We kind of wanted his endorsement. We figure if it can happen in Windham, it can happen in lots of places as well."

Sununu said he was interested in Hutchings' proposal because of his own engineering background, as well as his work experience with Dean Kamen, the founder of the FIRST Lego League competition that spurred Hutchings' proposal.

"It's fantastic. For four years I worked with Dean Kamen ... that competition really gets them interested," Sununu said.

Sununu was part of an April 10 vote in the U.S. Senate that passed the Clean Energy Tax Stimulus Act, granting tax credits to families and businesses that used renewable energy sources.

"It's meant to strengthen tax credits to encourage renewable energy," Sununu said. "We've had tax credits for wind and solar in the past, and we'd like to extend them."

Sununu said Windham School District should be able to benefit from other funding in the new legislation depending on the school district's eligibility.

Walking with Hutchings to the high school construction site, Sununu asked him about his family and his interest in science.

Although Hutchings is home schooled, he's excited to be in the first class to spend all four years at Windham High School when it opens in fall 2009.

While Mark Weissflog of KW Management presented varied plans of different sized wind turbines costing up to \$1.1 million, Hutchings was happy to hear the school district was considering a \$300,000 10-kilowatt model at the high school.

"That might even be a better option to inspire more kids," Hutchings said. "As long as it goes through, it'll be good for the future. I would like to see a bigger windmill, but it looks like we'll have the weather system."

The Windham Endowment for Community Advancement has already taken interest in assisting with raising money for the project, according to board member Tom Barstow.

"This is one of many projects we can potentially gather funds for," he said.

