

Windmill mission far from quixotic

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WINDHAM – When 13-year-old David Hutchings got school officials behind an idea to install a wind and solar power facility, he felt like the plan had a shot.

Now, after a half-hour meeting with Sen. John Sununu, Hutchings is sure he's on a roll.

"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.

"I'm so grateful he responded," said Hutchings' mother, Michelle. "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 due to his own engineering background, as well as his experiences 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.

? [He's one energetic kid](#) (7)

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 use 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 that while he backed the legislation to encourage the state's forestry industry, the Windham School District should be able to benefit from other funding in the new legislation for solar and wind power proposals depending on the school district's eligibility.

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

Sununu smiled when Hutchings told him that his mother taught him science and encouraged his FIRST Lego League team to pursue its renewable energy challenge.

"It's so important to these guys," Michelle Hutchings said. "When they first started and realized that the oil is running out, they wanted to help out."

Mark Weissflog of KW Management presented multiple plans for the project, involving different sized wind turbines, at a cost of up to \$1.1 million. Hutchings was happy to hear the school district was considering a 10 kilowatt model for \$300,000.

"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 expressed interest in helping with fundraising for the project, according to board member Tom Barstow.

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

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