

Schools eyeing on-site energy

By Elizabeth Benton, Register Staff

NEW HAVEN — With energy bills heading north of \$10 million a year, city schools are considering generating electric and thermal energy on-site, a move that has the potential to save \$1 million over the next decade.

New Haven's would be the first school district statewide to experiment with the refrigerator-sized energy plants, although there are nursing homes, apartment buildings and hospitals in Connecticut and the Northeast using the technology.

The Board of Education would contract with Massachusetts-based Aegis Energy Services to install six co-generation plants at Conte/West Hills Magnet School, John S. Martinez School, Hill Regional Career, James Hillhouse and Wilbur Cross high schools and the Sound School.

Aegis would own the generators and sell power back to the schools at a rate 10 to 12 percent less than United Illuminating Co.

The natural gas-powered generators produce steam, which the schools would use to heat water, specifically the swimming pools at five of the six schools selected to receive the generators. The Sound School does not have a pool, but its temperature-controlled tanks are heated year-round.

The district would pay nothing for Aegis to install the generators.

"As energy savings go, this is not that dramatic. This is a unique way to go without making any capital expenditures," said school energy consultant Edward Melchiori.

The generators are small, producing only 75 kilowatts per hour. Nighttime energy demand at most schools is more than 200 kilowatts per hour. Melchiori estimated only about 5 percent of a school's energy needs could be fulfilled by the generators.

But school officials at a meeting of the Board of Education's Administration and Finance Committee pitched the plan as a "no brainer" for the district.

"They run cleaner, greener, at less cost to the district," said schools Chief Operation Officer Will Clark.

The state Department of Public Utility Control subsidizes this type of generation and would give the schools about \$200,000 for using the technology.

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