

**Mayor's column for  
The Enterprise & The Beacon  
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In meeting with my Climate Protection Committee this week, we had a lengthy discussion about how little information is provided to power-utility customers about their actual day-to-day usage. Your utility bills certainly reflect your usage versus the previous year's period. And that's nice to see, especially if you're making attempts to reduce consumption. But it's not enough!

We agreed that ideally we would like to see a software created that pops up on your home computer screen that shows your consumption all the time—day or night. A program that can isolate your usage by appliance, by time of day, and by daily consumption.

Wouldn't you like to know how much energy you're using in your home (or business) while you sleep? I think most of us go to bed thinking that there are minimal or no draws on our personal power grid. Granted, there may not be much, but if there's a possibility to use less energy while we sleep, what better time to cut back?

None of us in the committee are aware of that type of software being commonly available, but we thought maybe the same result could be accomplished the "old-fashioned" way. With a little perseverance and attention to detail, a home or business owner could easily do a week-long survey of their consumption by reading their meter at a given time each night and morning, the goal being to get an idea of how much consumption is taking place in those periods.

After a week, you can determine whether it was worth the effort or not by multiplying your nighttime usage by the cost of those kilowatts. In most cases it's probably minimal, and you can rest easy. But maybe, just maybe, there's an opportunity to save a few bucks and do a little to protect our environment at the same time.

For business owners, it's a little trickier. You may choose to leave lights on at night for advertising or security purposes. You may have to leave the HVAC on at night to protect your inventory. There are, of course, ways to lessen your usage; for instance, CFL bulbs in place of your existing bulbs, or knock the thermostat a degree one way or the other. The savings, especially in these tough times, could add up quickly.

As is oftentimes the case, it will be the little things that make a difference in the climate change arena....and if we can save a few bucks at the same time, it's worth the effort.