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## Solar panel plant may shine on Rockland

By Stephen Betts  
*The Herald Gazette Associate Editor*

ROCKLAND (April 4): Rockland could become the home of a \$5 million solar panel manufacturing plant that could provide nearly 40 well-paying jobs.

Advertisement



Chris Straka

The owner of Ascendant Energy Company of Rockland, Chris Straka, is scheduled to make a presentation Monday, April 6 to the Rockland City Council in support of a grant application to receive \$100,000 from the state's Community Development Block Grant program.

This grant would be one piece of a multiple-source financing plan for the startup of the plant.

Papers filed with the city note that Ascendant Energy wants to operate a plant to manufacture its solar concentrator invention.

The company has received numerous awards from the Maine Technology Institute to commercialize its proprietary PV/Thermal technology that delivers leading efficiencies for converting a square meter of solar energy, the

company's Web site states.

Community Development Director Rodney Lynch said a site for the plant has not been selected, but sites in Rockland are being reviewed.

A letter of intent has been sent to the Maine Department of Economic and Community Development to make the agency aware that Rockland plans to submit the application on behalf of Ascendant. The council will be asked to approve the application with the deadline for filing the application either June 5 for one round of grants or Aug. 14 for the next round.

The current plan calls for the company to employ 39 people. Of those, 33 would be line workers who would be paid \$17 per hour along with benefits. There would also be three shift supervisors who would be paid \$25 per hour, a chief financial officer who would be paid \$50 an hour, a production manager at \$40 an hour and an operations manager at \$40 an hour.

The \$100,000 would help complete the financing for the \$5 million project. The Maine Technology Asset Fund would contribute \$2.5 million with private equity of more than \$2 million.

The company's Web site states Ascendant Energy was founded in 2002 by Chief Executive Officer Straka. Ascendant Energy is developing mainstream markets for solar energy installations and innovative products that make solar more affordable, according to its Web site.

Ascendant has significant experience installing solar electric and solar thermal systems in commercial, institutional, and residential settings including affordable housing, education, property management, and mid-size enterprise markets, according to the site.

The company has research and development and sales offices in Rockland and Portland.

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