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Delaware County to receive \$3.66 million in federal energy grants

Funds will be used to make county operations more energy-efficient

Delaware County Council announced Friday, Sept. 18, that the county is receiving nearly \$3.7 million in energy efficiency grants that will be utilized for several projects including solar panels on the County Government Center, an energy audit and improvements at the county prison, and a municipal grant program. It is also estimated that these initiatives will create 40 new jobs.

U.S. Energy Secretary Steven Chu this week announced funding awarded to Pennsylvania counties and cities from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) to support energy efficiency and conservation projects. Delaware County was the first county in the Southeast region to receive this award and one of only two counties in the state to receive funds in the first round of allocations.

Last year, County Council appointed the Energy and Environmental Advisory Board, chaired by County Councilwoman Christine Fizzano Cannon, to aid in the development of an overall Energy and Environmental Plan for the county, and to recommend initiatives and actions to County Council. Mrs. Fizzano Cannon said Delaware County was in an excellent position to apply for funding because of the groundwork done by the Advisory Board.

“Delaware County was poised and ready to receive a significant amount in federal funding for energy conservation because we had already identified and analyzed potential initiatives. We had already targeted projects through our Energy Advisory Board,” said Mrs. Fizzano Cannon. “We had a working plan in place, we have projects identified, and now with these funds, we can even expand upon our initiatives.”

“Delaware County Council wants to save funds by making its operations as efficient as possible while encouraging conservation among residents and individual municipalities,” Mrs. Fizzano Cannon said.

At the request of Council, the Energy and Environmental Advisory Board provided recommendations for both immediate actions and long-term improvements to conserve energy and promote the environment.

“So when the opportunity arose to access \$3.66 million in federal funds for energy projects without having to spend County dollars to match, Delaware County was ready to put forward projects that use clean, renewable energy, promote energy efficiency and reduce costs,” she said. “These projects are being performed in conjunction with and in addition to the energy savings contract that the County has underway that will retrofit our facilities with energy savings upgrades that will mean saving tax dollars and protecting the environment.”

(more)

(Energy funding continued)

“In today’s economy, there is no doubt that we have to maximize government resources, save energy and save tax dollars. We have selected projects with the aim of promoting energy efficiency, reducing energy use and saving money in the long and short term,” Mrs. Fizzano Cannon said.

Delaware County’s Energy Efficiency and Conservation Strategy

The five major goals of Delaware County’s Energy Efficiency and Conservation Strategy (EECS) are: 1) reduce Delaware County's reliance on conventional power and increase the County's clean energy production capacity; 2) save residents and taxpayers money by reducing energy costs; 3) reduce the County’s amount of greenhouse gas emissions (GHG); 4) educate County residents about the environmental impacts of excessive energy use; and 5) create additional jobs through energy-related improvements and projects.

To attain these overarching goals, each of the individual proposed projects contains more specific goals and objectives.

1. Delaware County proposes installation of a photovoltaic system for the roof of the County government center. The installation would generate an annual production of approximately 360,882 kWh (ac). The goal of this installation is to reduce the amount of energy Delaware County purchases from the local utility company. The solar installation will create additional impact on top of the reduction in energy usage Delaware County expects to achieve as a result of energy efficiency improvements undertaken as part of a recently completed Guaranteed Energy Savings Contract.

2. Delaware County plans to conduct an energy audit at the County-owned prison and then to perform energy efficiency improvements recommended by that audit. The audit and energy efficiency improvements at the prison would be a step towards reducing the demand from a large energy user in the County, and would also result in increased employment, taxpayer savings, and decreased greenhouse gas emissions.

3. The goal of the Municipal energy conservation grant program is to encourage municipalities within the County to become more energy efficient by making grants available for comprehensive energy audits and the installation of recommended measures. This program will provide for energy improvements on facilities other than those owned by the County.

4. The goal of the transportation efficiency program is to increase energy efficiency and reduce air quality effects caused by single occupancy vehicle trips. To achieve this goal, Delaware County has established the objective of reduce approximately 100 single-occupancy vehicle trips among County employees.

5. Finally, creation of an Energy Conservation Plan and Action Strategy will create a vision for future energy conservation efforts in the County. A consultant will be hired within six months of the date of award, and will begin the process of developing the Plan, including an extensive public participation process.