



COUNTY OF DELAWARE
GOVERNMENT CENTER BUILDING
201 W. FRONT STREET
MEDIA, PENNSYLVANIA

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COUNTY COUNCIL GOES SOLAR, HYBRID AND GREEN

Energy/Environmental Advisory Board announces first Public Forum

Solar panels, hybrid cars and energy savings plans are just a few of the energy initiatives Delaware County Council is undertaking to conserve costs and promote a cleaner environment.

County Council held an Energy Awareness press conference Sept. 16 at the Government Center courtyard, one block from the county's Sweney Building where 27 solar panels were installed on the roof this summer. Council also displayed two new Saturn Vue hybrid cars that will realize a fuel savings for the county fleet of vehicles.

And that's just the start of a major energy initiative throughout county government.

Five months after appointing an eight-member Energy and Environmental Advisory Board, County Council is going green by implementing several energy-saving practices, plus Council will host its first public energy forum on Sept. 25 in the County Council meeting room to seek input from residents.

Council's mission is to conserve energy, conserve tax dollars and create a cleaner environment.

Council Member Christine Fizzano Cannon has been meeting with the Energy and Environmental Advisory Board and its subcommittees frequently to develop a conservation road map for county government. Council will use the Board's input to develop an Energy Conservation Plan Element that will be included in the County's Comprehensive Plan.

"There is no question that we have to be energy-efficient in this day and age," said Council member Christine Fizzano Cannon. "Whether it's gas prices, spikes in utility bills or concerns about air quality, it is clear that the way we produce and use energy is a critical issue for county government."

"And, if we conserve energy, we will also be conserving tax dollars," she added.

County Council's Energy Conservation Plan is still being developed, but highlights include:

☀ **Solar energy:** Solar panels were installed in June on top of the county's Sweney Building, 313 Front St., which houses the Office of the Public Defender. In a cooperative program with Media Borough, County Council secured a Pennsylvania Energy Harvest Grant to fund installation of 27 photovoltaic panels on top of the Sweney Building. Total cost is \$45,000, with \$22,822 funded through the grant and the remainder funded by county dollars.

Annual production for the panels is expected to be 5,650 kWh (kilowatt hours), which translates to a savings of 11-13 barrels of oil per year. Use of solar energy results in reduced pollutant emissions and reduced use of electricity for heat and air-conditioning. The greatest energy savings is during the summer months when electricity demand is up.

☀ **Hybrid Cars:** Delaware County purchased two 2009 Saturn Vue hybrid cars at a price of \$23,323 each. Starting this month, the cars will be used by the departments of Consumer Affairs and Parks and Recreation.

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The county will realize a fuel savings because the hybrids switch to electric-assist when not accelerating. Consumer reports indicate the Saturn Vue gets 25 miles per gallon in city traffic and 32 on highway driving. The anticipated fuel savings is 25 percent over that of gas-only cars.

The cars are purchased through a state contract that enables the county to take advantage of competitive pricing at the state level.

Council Vice-Chairman Jack Whelan said the county is also formulating a county car-use policy that would promote fuel economy through good driving habits such as anti-idling, discouraging Jack-rabbit starts and proper tire inflation.

☀ **Energy Cost Reduction Plan:** County Council plans to implement energy-saving improvements or alterations in its facilities through initiatives outlined in the Pennsylvania Guaranteed Energy Savings Act (GESA).

Under GESA, the county can retrofit county facilities with equipment that will reduce energy consumption and/or operating costs *with* a guarantee to recoup the expense through energy savings over a period not to exceed 15 years.

GESA allows agencies to contract for energy conservation measures in existing buildings without the requirement of an up-front capital budget allocation. In other words, the guaranteed savings are used to cover the financing costs over a period of time. This is a win-win situation for the county and its taxpayers as the county is guaranteed to recoup initial costs in energy savings over 15 years.

The GESA calls for such changes as automated energy control systems, modification of lighting fixtures, and upgrades to mechanical equipment such as boilers, heaters and air-conditioners.

“This is a critical issue, especially now as we all face a spike in our energy costs when rate caps expire,” said Vice-Chair Whelan. “Through the Guaranteed Energy Savings Act, Delaware County will be able to accomplish major energy-savings improvements to county facilities here in Media and out at Fair Acres. Cutting demand for electricity is possible and economically sound.”

☀ **Public Input:** The Energy and Environmental Advisory Board has been meeting monthly to assess a wide variety of initiatives and to develop an Energy Conservation Plan Element that will be included in the County’s overall Comprehensive Plan.

The Board will host its first public meeting 6:30-8 p.m. Sept. 25 in the County Council meeting room at the Government Center in Media. During the meeting, members of the Board will seek public input on energy and environmental initiatives.

Mrs. Fizzano Cannon said the Board is looking at a wide range of energy-saving initiatives that include waste reduction, recycling, anti-idling, land use and preservation and clean energy programs such as wind and solar power.

In addition, Mrs. Fizzano Cannon said the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission is producing a greenhouse gas inventory for nine counties, including Delaware County. DVRPC formed a Greenhouse Gas Emissions Inventory Advisory Group, which will meet on Sept. 18.

“The main goal of all of us is to use less energy through awareness and better technology,” Mrs. Fizzano Cannon said. “We want to be sure that we operate our buildings in the most energy-efficient manner. There are so many small proactive steps that add up, from turning off the lights and computers to conserving landfill space, promoting recycling and encouraging carpooling.”

“I urge residents and groups with environmental concerns to attend the Sept. 25 public meeting. Council wants your input as we move forward to conserve energy, preserve the environment and conserve tax dollars.”