



Wayne residents hear about energy alternative program

NOVEMBER 17, 2014, 7:55 PM LAST UPDATED: MONDAY, NOVEMBER 17, 2014, 7:55 PM

BY MINJAE PARK

STAFF WRITER | THE RECORD

WAYNE — The township has joined a county program that could save residents a month's worth of electric bills each year, township officials and energy consultants said Monday.

The Passaic County Energy Cooperative Pricing System pools residents' energy needs and, with strength in numbers, seeks bids from energy suppliers. The lower costs come from "combining the energy usage of our residents with many other residents in Passaic County," Mayor Chris Vergano said.

A lower price is guaranteed and savings range between 5 percent to 15 percent of ratepayers' bills, said representatives from the consulting firm that's implementing the program. The company, Commercial Utility Consultants and Concord Energy Services, made its presentation Monday for dozens of residents in two public meetings at town hall.

"Why would anyone not want to do it?" one resident asked.

"I really don't know," said Rich Steel, vice president of Commercial Utility Consultants.

The representatives stressed there are ample opportunities to withdraw and continue with the system in place now. After a live auction, expected to be held next month, township officials can choose not to accept any of the bids from energy suppliers. If a bid is accepted, residents who have not already switched to third-party energy suppliers would automatically be included but could choose to opt out at any time, at no cost, Steel said. About 80 percent choose to stay in the program, he said.

Once a bid is accepted, the new rate would take effect about 90 days after the auction and cannot rise for the duration of the contract, regardless of changes in the energy market, Steel said.

Under the program, the utility companies that maintain services, such as responding to outages, would not change. In Wayne, they are npany that makes the energy.

"We are always looking for ways make Wayne a great place to live," Councilwoman Lonni Miller Ryan said. "Potentially cutting electricity costs without any risk to residents is one way that we're trying to fulfill that goal."

Matt Eisenberg, a resident who stayed after one of the presentations to ask Steel more questions, said afterward, "I can't see any downside to it."

Email: parkm@northjersey.com