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The Upper Makefield Board of Supervisors is taking the lead in promoting municipal clean energy usage.

By: Ann Cole 02/28/2007

At their February 21 meeting, the supervisors approved, 3 to 2, becoming a Clean Energy Community. This means that the township commits to purchasing 20 percent of its electricity from clean energy sources by 2010; through outreach and community development, encourage 7 percent of its residents to sign up for clean energy; and to begin their purchasing of clean energy immediately.

Molly Tsongas, project associate with SmartPower, whose "purpose is to assist communities in the purchase and support of clean energy," made the presentation to the five supervisors. She explained that by signing up for the program, the township would be taking the lead in promoting clean air and environmental responsibility.

"The idea is that the municipality serves as a local leader and an icon for sustainable energy," she said. "We think it's a good match for you and hope you can move forward with this."

The program utilizes sustainable power from three sources: PECO Wind, Native Energy, which uses farm methane, and Energy Cooperative, which uses mostly bio-gas from landfills. The program itself is limited to 20 municipalities, and 10 have already signed up, including Lower Makefield. Communities who qualify and reach their goals of 20 percent clean energy and 7 percent residential usage receive a free 1-kilowatt solar energy system valued at \$10,000.

Tsongas said the township can decide where to place the solar energy system, adding that many municipalities chose to place the panel on a school, library or similar building to serve as a reminder and an epitome to clean energy.

The supervisors had already purchased 10 percent clean energy through PECO Wind in December, and 3 percent of Upper Makefield residents use clean energy in heating and cooling their homes.

Supervisor Dave Kulig objected to the township committing to the program. "I do not think it is the [prerogative] of this board to try and create policy on this level," he argued. "I don't want to commit our taxpayers to do that." He contended that individual residents

may sign up for the program if they choose, but that as a municipality, they have an obligation to be more careful, more economic with their resources.

Chair Daniel Worden calculated that the 20 percent commitment to clean energy would cost the average Upper Makefield taxpayer \$0.11 per person per year.

Supervisor Daniel Rattigan said that the program exhibits confidence and community leadership. "For the nominal amount of money this is costing the taxpayers to do our part to make the environment cleaner, it's worth it," he said.

Kulig questioned if there is some tangible benefit that the residents could reap from the program, to which Tsongas replied that the program supports Pennsylvania industry, provides jobs, supports better health, and as an intangible gain, it's doing the right thing for the right reasons.

The supervisors promised to purchase 20 percent of clean energy by 2010, with Worden, Rattigan, and Robert West voting yes, and Kulig and William Gunser voting no.