



News from the Somerset County Board of Chosen Freeholders

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Somerset County Announces Renewable Energy Program

The Somerset County Board of Chosen Freeholders has authorized the launch of a renewable-energy program that seeks to capitalize on the more than 5 million square feet of rooftop space on county, municipal and school buildings throughout the county.

“We’re moving forward with a renewable-energy program to place solar arrays on public-sector rooftops at no cost to taxpayers,” said Freeholder Deputy Director Jack M. Ciattarelli, liaison to the county Energy Council, which has endorsed the program.

“This is a dynamic model whereby public-sector rooftop space will be, in essence, leased out to reduce our carbon footprint and decrease taxes by lowering our energy costs,” he said. “In return, a third party will own the solar arrays and take advantage of federal tax credits and accelerated depreciation which are not available to local governments and school districts.”

“Using Somerset County’s engineering and financial resources, through the Improvement Authority, makes this a perfect shared-services opportunity,” Freeholder Director Rick Fontana said. “By centralizing the program at the county, many municipalities and most of all school districts will now be able to save taxes by installing a renewable and clean energy source atop their buildings.”

The Board of Freeholders has authorized the Improvement Authority to hire special legal and bond counsel to prepare requests for proposal (RFPs) to retain the services necessary to proceed with the program. The cost of these counsels will be paid for by the third party that owns and operates the solar arrays.

Freeholder Ciattarelli said the RFPs for the potential vendors should be posted by the end of this year, with a decision by the Freeholder Board anticipated by the end of the first quarter of 2010. Installation of the solar panels on various public buildings could begin in mid-2010 and be completed by year-end, he said, “with the goal of producing renewable energy and cash flow to Somerset County within the first quarter of 2011.”

A letter from Freeholder Director Fontana outlining the program will be going to all mayors and school superintendents, with a similar letter from County Administrator Richard E. Williams going to municipal managers and school business administrators. Presentations will be made to municipalities and school districts later this year.

**Rick Fontana, Freeholder Director * Jack M. Ciattarelli, Freeholder Deputy Director
Peter S. Palmer, Freeholder * Robert Zaborowski, Freeholder * Patricia L. Walsh, Freeholder**
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