



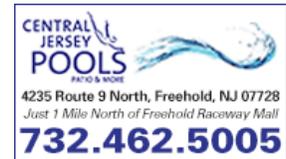
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Energy aggregation program gets off the ground in Howell

By TAYLOR M. LIER
Staff Writer

HOWELL — The township is moving forward with its energy aggregation program after the initial opt-out period came to a close on July 23.

Energy aggregation is a program in which a governing body selects an electricity supplier and places residential customers into service from that supplier with the promise that a lower cost for the energy will save the customer money.

Under energy aggregation, residents are automatically enrolled in the program, but they retain the right to opt out.



A public auction on May 20 produced a cost of 9.709 cents per kilowatt hour, which is less than the Jersey Central Power & Light (JCP&L) cost of 10.56 cents per kilowatt hour, according to an energy aggregation mailer that was sent to residents by municipal officials.

The winning energy supplier at the auction was TriEagle Energy.

Before the initial opt-out period ended, 15,504 Howell residential units were eligible for the energy aggregation program, according to Nicholas Reynolds, chief operating officer of Commercial Utility Consultants (CUC), which is Howell's energy consultant.

As of late August there were 4,032 optouts and 51 opt-ins into the energy aggregation program, according to Reynolds.

"The opt-ins are residential customers who had a contract with third-party suppliers and who chose to opt-in once their contract has ended," Reynolds said.

As more residents' contracts with their energy suppliers come to the end of their term, more will be eligible to opt in with Howell's energy aggregation program.

However, the opt-in process will not happen automatically and residents who wish to opt in must contact CUC to be included in the program, according to Reynolds.

CUC is maintaining updates of residents who decide to opt into the program, according to Reynolds. The update is in the form of a list and gets sent to the supplier weekly.

In July, municipal officials did not provide the exact dollar amount residential customers would save each month if they elect to participate in the energy aggregation program.

CUC is working to design a program that will help residents monitor their savings and track them online at the website www.njaggregation.us.

With the initial opt-out period ended, JCP&L has sent letters to residents informing them when the switch in their electricity supplier will formally take place.

"For customers who were switched in late August, they will see this on their bill in late September and so on," Reynolds said.

Earlier this summer, members of the Township Council said CUC expected to meet with the Howell Chamber of Commerce and community development representatives to propose the idea of energy aggregation to business operators.

So far, no such meeting has been scheduled, according to Susan Dominguez, the chamber's executive director.

Unlike residential customers who are automatically placed into the energy aggregation program and have the option to opt out, businesses are not automatically placed into the program and have the option to opt in.

"We welcome businesses to contact us to discuss their energy aggregation options," Reynolds said.

Plumsted Township was the first municipality in New Jersey to participate in an energy aggregation program two years ago.

Peter Ylvisaker, the executive director of the Plumsted Municipal Utilities Authority, said he believes it has had a positive effect on residents.

"The energy aggregation program has saved our residents money, and the participation rate has gone up from 60 percent when it was introduced to 75 percent, and the savings for residents were estimated at 3.5 percent, which dollar-wise translated into customers saving about \$150 a year," Ylvisaker said.

The effort to get residents to opt into the energy aggregation program was relatively easy, according to Ylvisaker, but encouraging business operators in the municipality to participate remains a difficult task.

"We have about 100 businesses township wide, and only nine have opted into the program and I believe it is due to businesses having their own independent energy program, but we would like to get more businesses to participate," he said.

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