City of Dover update

As electric rates soar nationwide, Dover provides expert help for customers to spend less

by Councilman Gerald Rocha, *Utility Committee Chairman*

As electric rates surge across the United States, residents of Dover, Delaware, are finding relief through innovative programs aimed at reducing energy consumption and costs. With homes in Dover averaging 30 to 40 years in age, many residents are grappling with energy inefficiencies that significantly increase their monthly bills. To address these challenges, the City of Dover Electric Department, in partnership with the Delaware Municipal Electric Corporation (DEMEC) is proud to announce its participation in the Efficiency Smart Program. The Efficiency Smart Program is an initiative designed to help residents improve the energy efficiency of their homes, particularly those that are older and may not have modern energy-saving features. This program provides various services aimed at lowering energy consumption and costs for participants.

The problem of high energy usage is particularly acute among the lower economic classes, who often reside in older homes lacking modern energy-efficient systems. These households face unique challenges as the aging infrastructure struggles to maintain comfortable temperatures year-round, resulting in excessive energy consumption for heating and cooling. The issue is not isolated to Dover; it is a national concern affecting many communities across the United States.

The City of Dover's Electric Department recognizes the pressing need for supporting residents in navigating this energy landscape. The Efficiency Smart Program will provide customers with access to expert evaluations of their homes. Residents can request these evaluations at no cost, allowing trained professionals to assess energy usage patterns and identify potential areas for improvement. The program is designed to offer no- or low-cost solutions tailored to the specific needs of each household, empowering residents to take control of their energy bills.

Customers participating in the program can expect recommendations that may include upgrading insulation, sealing drafts, or investing in more efficient heating and cooling systems. These improvements not only promise to lower electric bills but also enhance the overall comfort and livability of homes, which have often been left behind in the wake of technological advancements.

"By tapping into the expertise offered through the Efficiency Smart Program, we aim to provide our residents with practical solutions that make a tangible difference in their everyday lives," said Paul Waddell, City of Dover Electric Director. "This initiative represents a crucial step toward modernizing our approach to energy efficiency while easing the financial burden on families in our community."

While the Efficiency Smart Program can offer significant improvements at the household level, the City of Dover Electric Department emphasizes that broader systemic changes are also necessary. The electric grid, much like many of the homes it services, requires design, maintenance, and modernization to meet the evolving demands of energy consumption.

As energy rates continue to climb, the need for programs like Efficiency Smart becomes increasingly critical. Residents can take advantage of these services now more than ever, utilizing expert insights to improve household efficiency and achieve notable reductions in their electric bills.

In a time when every dollar counts, the City of Dover stands firm in its commitment to providing actionable, effective solutions for its residents, ensuring they are not only able to cope with soaring energy prices but thrive amid them. By investing in energy efficiency, Dover is fostering a more sustainable future for all, paving the way for a community that prioritizes both economic and environmental well-being.

For residents interested in participating in the Efficiency Smart Program, more information can be obtained by contacting the Dover Electric Department directly at 302-736-7070, marking an opportunity to invest in the future right from their homes. Please feel free to visit www.efficiencysmart.org/dover-delaware for more information.

Legislative News

by George "Jody" Sweeney
Kent County Levy Court Commissioner, 5th District

A lot has been said and printed about the State Legislature passing a bill that overrides the Sussex County Council to allow off-shore wind to come on-shore at a location in Sussex County. I absolutely believe in the principle of SUBSIDIARITY, defined as "state or federal government should not interfere with local governments. But larger institutions have essential responsibilities when local governments cannot adequately protect advance the common good." So, in the recent case of HB 159, it was contingent upon the State Legislature to override the Sussex County Council's decision to block the US Wind off-shore turbine project.

US Wind had already received approvals from the federal and Maryland governments to install the turbines and a recommendation of approval from the Sussex County Planning and Zoning Committee for conditional permit at 3R's Beach, on a parcel zoned for heavy industrial use, but requiring conditional use for this purpose. The wind project would install 112 wind turbines 10-12 miles off the coast of Ocean City. If you are reading this in Dover, DE, I would ask if you can see the fireworks being set off during the Delaware State Fair every July? If not, I doubt you will be able to see the 350 ft turbines off the coast of Ocean City. Heck, I can barely see the fireworks in Dover from just outside of Wyoming.

There is a gap between the electricity Delaware providers have and what will be needed. Purchasing electricity from out-of-grid providers is more expensive than generating electricity locally. Options are to generate more electricity for the local grid from gas, coal, nuclear, wind, or solar to bridge the gap. Gas and coal contribute to Climate Change. Nuclear carries the stigma of Chernobyl or Three Mile Island, but is under consideration. Wind and Solar are renewable and clean, and when generated locally, will help to lower Delawareans electricity costs.

Turbines off Ocean City, MD would feed the PJM grid. PJM's regional grid covers 7 states (DE, MD, NJ, PA, VA, WV, and OH) as well as parts of 5 others (MI, IN, IL, NC, KY), and Washington, DC. Delawareans absolutely benefit by using wind turbines off Ocean City. This wind field would generate 1750megawatts of energy, enough to provide electricity for more than one million homes in those 12 states.

Opponents claimed that Delawareans would not benefit. Local electric providers do not receive the Sustainable Renewable Energy Credits, but Delawareans would benefit with the additional electricity on the grid.

Renewable energy, such as wind or solar, has become a partisan hot topic issue around Climate Change. Gas and Coal electricity generation contributes to Climate Change. Acknowledging that wind power is needed would be antithetical to those who deny Climate Change.

But back to the issue of subsidiarity: I completely agree with the philosophy of local control, but understand the need of the State Government to govern for the benefit of all Delawareans by overriding such decisions. I suspect solar farm approvals will be one of the next bills to come forward from the State to ensure that all Delawareans do not face even higher electric bills.