



Majority of Livingston Residents to Receive 100 Percent Renewable Energy

By Danielle Santola

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LIVINGSTON, NJ — The Township of Livingston is on track to becoming the second municipality in the state and eighth in the country to make 100 percent renewable energy available to a majority of its residents after the mayor and council passed resolutions last week that will provide 100 percent renewable energy to residents living in PSEG territory and 41 percent (a 20-percent increase from the state-mandated 21 percent) to residents who are JCP&L customers.

The adoption of these resolutions, which is the culmination of an ongoing conversation surrounding energy aggregation that began in 2017, will ultimately save the township \$1.125 million over the next 16 months while Livingston's PSEG customers—nearly three quarters of the total population—receive 100 percent green energy.

"As an environmental lawyer who has dedicated an entire career of 26 years bringing polluters to justice, this achievement is thrilling," said Mayor Al Anthony. "I've always been for renewable energy, but when representing an entire town, an energy aggregation deal has to make sound financial sense for our residents and be with a company we trust.

"Now that we reached an agreement with [Gabel Associates] that makes sense for the entire township, I'm honored to serve as the Mayor of Livingston as we become a clean energy leader in New Jersey and the entire nation. I think we have shown it can be done: renewable green energy at reasonable rates and even cost savings."

The two resolutions adopted on Wednesday will award a contract to a third party to provide electric generation service to Livingston Community Energy Aggregation (LCEA) participants residing in both PSEG and JCP&L territories and to also provide government energy aggregation services in connection with the LCEA.

After adopting an ordinance in September 2017 to authorize the establishment of an energy aggregation program in Livingston, the governing body spoke with several consultants before officially selecting Gabel Associates as the township's energy advisor in March 2018. Although Gabel Associates collected the necessary data to develop the community's energy profile and set up two competitive auctions in 2018 for third-party energy suppliers to provide renewable energy to the community, both auctions failed to deliver results that were beneficial to the community.

Last week, Gabel conducted another auction for the township that resulted in 100 percent renewable energy and a 10-percent savings for PSEG customers. As a result of competitive bidding

for aggregated purchase, eligible residents who choose to take advantage of this opportunity will save just over \$10 per month to the average household, or a total of approximately \$167 over the 16-month term, according to the council.

Due to market conditions and current Board of Public Utilities (BPU) tariff rates, the results for JCP&L customers were not as favorable, but will still allow the 28 percent of Livingston's residents who live in JCP&L territory to receive electricity from 20 percent more renewable sources than the state-mandated minimum percentage as well as modest savings over current JCP&L rates.

“This is a monumental night for us and near and dear to my heart, as it protects our environment for future generations while fighting pollution and climate change, which is very real,” said Anthony, who added that he “knows the harmful effects of environmental contamination firsthand” as someone who has represented thousands of victims of environmental contamination—including cancer cases throughout the state and the country in community lawsuits and class actions—and has also represented governmental entities against polluters.

“I also want to hand it to Gabel,” he said. “We did look at other providers and after checking references I knew they were the company to trust. They always told us when it wasn't a good time to do an aggregation deal, but now the timing was right. Their honesty throughout this process is very much appreciated. This is a big win for Livingston and the environment.”

Councilman Shawn Klein, who has also been a champion of energy aggregation since the beginning, stated that passing these resolutions “is Livingston saying that we are going to be making a major statement about how we feel about climate change.”

“We are not going to be using energy that comes from coal-producing plants anymore, we’re not going to be using energy that comes from nuclear—this is going to be clean energy: solar and wind,” said Klein, who added that nearly half of the energy being used in town will be locally produced. “I’m personally thrilled...There’s one other municipality in the state that has done this, but we’re about three times the size of that one. I hope that a lot of municipalities after this step up and follow our example.”

Commenting on the cost savings involved in the most recent proposal from Gabel Associates compared to those previously presented to the council, Deputy Mayor Rudy Fernandez stated that “the third time’s the charm.”

“The bottom line is that this is going to save residents money, both in the PSEG area of the town and the JCP&L area of the town,” he said. “Just because of the way the bidding worked and the pricing, the PSEG customers will see more of a discount off of their bill...but we’ve tried this three times, and the first two times we did not go through it because there were no cost savings to our residents. Because of some legislative changes and where we are in the bidding cycle, we were able to see some savings this time around.”

Stating that the switch to renewable energy was a “long time coming” for Livingston, Councilman Ed Meinhardt recognized former and current council members for continuing to advocate for this issue.

“We look forward to the education process that will be coming on this to the residents of Livingston,” said Meinhardt. “There will be a lot of information coming out to the residents and there will be a meeting set up sometime in April to be determined that will also be on videotape for those who can’t make it.”

Michael Vieira, who was recently sworn in as Livingston’s newest council member, added that although he was not a council member during most of these discussions, he "made it a point to quickly catch up and learn how this proposal would affect Livingston."

"I was very proud to vote yes for making Livingston one of a few municipalities in the country to exceed the clean energy requirements," said Vieira. "Everyone wins."

According to the council, all residents will be notified of the details of this program in the near future, including details about their ability to opt out and keep their current supplier and how to estimate their individual savings.

Residents should be aware that this program only impacts the supply component of the electric service, and the delivery of the electricity—including maintenance and repair of power lines, outages, etc.—will continue to be provided by either PSEG or JCP&L. The consumer will not see anything different in their service except a new supplier and lower rate listed on their bill.

While PSEG costumers will have the added satisfaction of knowing they are using 100 percent renewable energy, the township will continue to monitor the market and is prepared to act on any opportunity that arises to offer JCP&L customers 100 percent renewable energy.