



NEWS

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Montgomery County Announces 100% Wind Power Purchase & Commitment To Sustainable Operations

Norristown, PA (May 20, 2019) – The Montgomery County Commissioners announced a wind energy purchase that will power all of the county’s electrical accounts with emission-free renewable power. The switch to 100 percent wind energy is just one action the county is taking as part of the Commitment to Sustainable Operations resolution the Commissioners adopted by a 2-1 vote at their meeting Thursday.

Montgomery County Commissioners Chair Dr. Valerie Arkoosh and Vice Chair Ken Lawrence Jr. voted in favor of the measure. Commissioner Joe Gale voted against it.

In addition to the wind generated electrical purchase, the Commissioners made a commitment to transition to renewable energy for heating all county-owned buildings and powering all county-owned vehicles by 2050.

“By switching to wind generated electricity now and adopting this commitment to sustainable operations, Montgomery County is raising the bar in terms of responding to climate change,” Arkoosh said. “We’ve already seen the worldwide impacts of climate change and now scientists are reporting that up to a million species are facing extinction. We must take action now.”

The switch to wind-generated electrical power will cost \$24,000 annually, which is just 1.4% of the County’s electrical costs. When the County negotiated the current 3-year contract for electrical generation, a savings of \$700,000 was realized over the three years. The additional cost for wind generated electricity is offset by the savings already realized from the contract with that supplier.

The resolution adopted Thursday also directs staff to create a working group of county employees to do a comprehensive review and create a plan for Montgomery County government to increase sustainability across all operations.

Lawrence said he views the Commitment to Sustainable Operations as an investment.

“This will not only benefit our environment, it will also benefit our bottom line,” Lawrence said. “This isn’t just about using renewable energy. It’s also about reducing our energy usage overall and that will reduce costs.”

Gale said that he voted against the measure because he has concerns about the long-term financial impact it could have on the County’s budget.

“Montgomery County should not be spending extra taxpayer money just so the Majority Commissioners can call themselves ‘Green’ by claiming our energy comes from windmills in Texas. Moreover, the timing could not be worse because the additional costs will be exasperated by the increased energy usage associated with the construction of the new Justice Center,” Gale said.

“This is just one step in a larger plan to use global warming, climate change, extreme weather, or whatever the trendy term is now as an excuse to spend more tax dollars,” Gale said.

This initiative builds upon work that began in 2007 when the County adopted its initial Climate Change Action Plan and demonstrates the Commissioners commitment to achieving the goals set out in the county’s Comprehensive Plan, Montco 2040: A Shared Vision. Those goals include supporting a modern, resilient, green and energy-efficient infrastructure network, adapting to changing energy needs and helping municipalities within Montgomery County adjust to those changes.

Montgomery County has already taken a number of steps to make its operations more sustainable, including the installation of four electrical vehicle charging stations in One Montgomery Plaza earlier this year, the installation of a geothermal system at Peter Wentz Farmstead that reduced the total utility bill by 56.8 percent and the installation of a wood fired boiler at Green Lane Park that created an annual savings of between \$9,500 and \$12,000.

The \$15,000 cost to install the vehicle charging stations was offset by a \$9,000 grant from the state Department of Environmental Protection. Owners of electrical vehicles who park in One Montgomery Plaza can use a card or phone app to pay for the electricity they use.