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Council designates Energy Savers to negotiate municipal electric rates

By yourpennhills

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Penn Hills officials have settled on a North Hills energy broker to negotiate the best available electricity rate for the municipality, and within a few months, residents also may have the ability to get in on the savings.

Members of the Penn Hills Municipal Council voted unanimously Sept. 6 to designate Ross Township-based Energy Savers to seek energy providers, negotiate rates and manage energy programs. Municipal officials put out a request for proposals to electricity brokers in August.

Energy Savers Vice President Natalie Abel said her company is in the process of negotiating electric rates for Penn Hills, but expected savings between \$89,000 and \$113,000 per year, depending on consumption and usage.

If for some reason the provider Energy Savers selects goes out of business — a concern raised by deputy mayor Sarah Kuhn when Abel gave her initial presentation — any existing contract would be voided, and the municipality would have the option to find a new supplier, or to return to Duquesne Light for supply and transmission, Abel said.

In addition to serving the municipality, Energy Savers has plans to extend their negotiating power to residents as well.

Officials in Hampton — who also work with Energy Savers — introduced an energy-savings program for residents, a private offering through Energy Savers that Abel claimed could save residents 23 percent on their current electric bills. Abel said she is hoping to offer that same program to Penn Hills residents in the near future.

"It has been wildly successful," Hampton Township Manager Chris Lochner said. The residential program, he noted, is separate from the municipal program, but Energy Savers' function is the same: bid the market for the best possible residential rate.

Lochner said they found a 7.1-cents-per-kWh rate from TriEagle Energy, an electricity provider for Texas and Pennsylvania, and currently more than two-thirds of Hampton households participate in the program.

Lochner said the average residential participant in Hampton saves about \$10 per month.
