

# Herald News: Letters, August 4, 2011

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HERALD NEWS

Renewable energy program offers savings

Regarding solar energy development in [Passaic County](#) (Our Towns, July 24):

In these economic times, sharing services has become a critical and necessary component in governing. It is for this reason that the [Passaic County](#) Improvement Authority in conjunction with the [Passaic](#) County Board of Chosen Freeholders has developed the Passaic County Renewable Energy Program as a continuation of the county-wide Shared Service Initiative.

After following the development of the program in [Morris County](#) beginning in 2008 and investigating other renewable energy programs, commissioners of the PCIA chose to offer the county-wide Renewable Energy Program structure as it provides the greatest financial benefit to participating local governments and ultimately the taxpayers of the county. This model program is currently being implemented in Somerset, Morris, Union, Essex, Mercer, Hudson, Cumberland, Salem, Sussex and Monmouth counties.

The state requires that renewable energy contracts (also known as power purchase agreements) be awarded through a competitive contracting public procurement process or a traditional low bid public procurement process. Both processes require legal and engineering professionals to develop a Request for Proposals (RFPs) or bid documents, respectively.

The commissioners, through a fair and open process, issued requests for qualifications for special energy counsel and for consulting energy engineering services to assist the authority in the development of the RFP. The commissioners chose DeCotiis, Fitzpatrick and Cole and Birdsall Services Group, which is partnered with Gable Associates, based on their extensive experience and successes in other counties utilizing this same model program.

The concept of renewable energy has been promoted throughout the county via outreach sessions where both municipalities and school districts were represented. Each seminar presented attendees with an overview of the program and included a question-and-answer period.

Local governments that participate in the program have no upfront or long-term financial obligation other than to pay for the low-cost electricity generated from the solar renewable energy system that will be located on their property. Additionally, the local units have no debt service obligations.

This regionalized approach fosters a shared services program to implement renewable energy for local governments. Overall costs are reduced through aggregation. Smaller local governments that have opportunities for solar but may not attract solar developers on their own benefit when their projects are joined with larger more attractive solar projects.

The goal of the program is to allow local governments to reduce costs and go green without expending additional resources. This program represents shared services in its truest form.

Dennis F. Marco

Paterson

The writer is chairman of the [Passaic County](#) Improvement Authority.