



Lacey Township Community Energy Aggregation Program ("LCEA")

The Township has recently launched a new program, called the Lacey Community Energy Aggregation ("LCEA"), under which it has signed a contract with South Jersey Energy ("SJE") that will offer Township residents substantial savings on their electric bills! Residents are not obligated to participate in the program, and may 'opt-out' if you so choose. Eligible residents will be receiving a package in the mail from SJE in early February 2017 providing program details. Provided below is a program description as well as answers to frequently asked questions.

➤ Overview

In an effort to realize electricity cost savings for its residents, the Township of Lacey pursued membership in an electricity purchasing cooperative known as the Stafford Township Electric Aggregation Cooperative Pricing System ("STEACPS"). The purpose of the STEACPS, headed by Stafford Township, was to join forces with neighboring towns to create purchasing power to purchase electricity supply on behalf of residents in participating towns. Through a competitive procurement process conducted by the STEACPS, competing proposals were received from multiple State-licensed electric power suppliers, and a contract was recently awarded to the low bidder, South Jersey Energy ("SJE"). Under this contract, SJE will provide electric supply service at a significant discount to the price currently being charged by Jersey Central Power & Light ("Gas JCP&L") for the power supply portion of your electric bill.

As a result of this contract signed with SJE, the Township of Lacey is now pleased to announce the formation of the Lacey Community Energy Aggregation ("LCEA") Program. The LCEA Program is being implemented in accordance with State regulations and subject to the oversight of the NJ Board of Public Utilities, and has been authorized via Township Committee Ordinance No. #2013-21 Resolution Nos. #2013-272 and 2016-120.

This program will affect only the supply portion of your electric bill. The delivery portion will continue to be provided by JCP&L at regulated rates, and JCP&L will continue to provide all emergency and safety services, meter reading, billing and service restoration. Furthermore, residents will continue to have all existing consumer protections and rights.

South Jersey Energy is a licensed retail electric supplier that has been active in the State for several years and is currently serving more than 40,000 residential aggregation customers in New Jersey. South Jersey Energy will supply power to eligible Lacey residents for a 20-month contract beginning in March 2017 at a non-variable price of \$0.08655/kwh. This represents a savings of nearly 14% compared to the current average JCP&L tariff price for power supply of \$0.1007/kwh. The contract is expected to save the typical Township resident about \$200 over the 20-month contract term as compared to current JCP&L rates, with no change to the level of service.

Residential customers of JCP&L residing in the Township who do not currently have a third-party supply contract or a solar-power generating system are eligible to be included in the program. All such eligible residential customers in the Township will be receiving a package in the mail in early February 2017, which will provide all of the program details, and information on how you can 'opt-out' of the program should you not wish to participate. If you do not wish to participate in the program for any reason, you may simply opt out, with no strings or penalties using the opt-out information providing in the Information Package you will receive, or by contacting South Jersey Energy directly using the contact information below. If you do not opt-out within the 30-day opt-out period, which ends March 4th you will automatically be enrolled in the program and enjoy the electricity savings.

For residents seeking additional information, the Township has scheduled an Information Session on February 16, 2017 at 7:00 p.m., to be held in the Township's Municipal Court located at 818 W Lacey Rd., Forked River, NJ. The Township's energy consultant, Gabel Associates, will make a presentation and will then provide the opportunity to answer questions from residents.

The Township is pleased to provide you with this opportunity to save money on your energy costs. Please keep an eye out for specific information and mailings regarding the LCEA program in early February 2017, leading up to the program's implementation in March 2017.

Here are answers to some frequently asked questions about the program. . .

➤ **What is Community Energy Aggregation (CEA)?**

Community Energy Aggregation is a State program that allows a municipality to conduct a "bulk purchase" of energy supply on behalf of its residents, **at prices lower than the average utility price**. New Jersey regulations allow municipalities to take this approach to procure energy savings on your behalf.

The Township of Lacey retained Gabel Associates as the Township’s Energy Consultant, (at no cost to the Township), to assist with the implementation of the procurement process for a Third Party Supplier to provide power supply to its residents.

➤ **Who is Gabel Associates?**

Gabel Associates is a State-registered Energy Consultant that has been retained by Lacey to administer and implement the LCEA program. The firm has helped pioneer energy procurement in New Jersey and has been supporting large scale energy aggregations (like this one) for over 15 years. Gabel Associates was also a key participant in the development of the State’s rules under which these programs are run.

Gabel Associates is a well-respected Energy Consultant that has been in business in New Jersey for over 20 years, with its offices located in Highland Park, New Jersey. Gabel Associates was the first energy consulting firm in the State to have successfully implemented a CEA program in New Jersey. The firm has now successfully completed CEA programs for numerous municipalities in the State, many of which are in their second and third iterations. These programs, also implemented in nearby Plumsted and Toms River have saved millions of dollars for New Jersey residents.

➤ **Who is South Jersey Energy?**

South Jersey Energy has been a retail electric power supplier for more than 10 years, and has served residential customers in New Jersey since 2013. Today, South Jersey Energy serves more than 40,000 residential aggregation meters state-wide.

South Jersey Energy can be contacted as follows:

South Jersey Energy (BPU License # ESL-0012) Toll Free Telephone Number: (888)-814-2304 Website: www.southjerseyenergy.com Address: P.O Box 111, Hammonton, NJ 08037 Email Address: LCEA-SJE@sjindustries.com

➤ **How does the LCEA Program work?**

The Township of Lacey, with the assistance of Gabel Associates, issued a public, competitive bidding process in Fall 2016 following strict competitive contracting laws in an effort to select a Third Party Supplier (“TPS”) of electricity at a price below the average JCP&L tariff price (or BGS tariff price) for power supply. Under State regulations, the Township can only award a contract to a supplier if their price offered through the competitive process produced energy savings as compared to the JCP&L tariff price. A contract award was made

in December 2016 to the low bidder, South Jersey Energy, at a price substantially below the current JCP&L tariff price for power supply.

All eligible residents (all residential customers of JCP&L in the Township except for those that already have their own TPS contract or that have a solar electric generating system on their property that supplies power to their home) are automatically included in the LCEA program and will be sent a notice in the mail in early January 2017. This notice, known as the Opt-Out Notice, provides all the details of the program as well as the various ways to opt-out of the program, including the awarded TPS's toll free telephone number, email address, and a postage-paid opt-out card.

Customers have 30 days to review the Opt-Out Notice and decide whether they wish to opt-out of the program. After that 30 day opt-out period concludes on **March 4, 2017**, those residents who do not opt-out of the program will be enrolled by the winning supplier (South Jersey Energy).

Even after an electric account is enrolled, residents remain free to opt-out of the program at any time during the contract. Participation in the LCEA Program is 100% optional. There are no any fees or penalties if you decide to opt-out.

As noted above customers that have their own, independent TPS contracts are not initially included but are given the option to join the LCEA program.

➤ **Will I receive two bills?**

No, you will always receive one bill from your utility. The only thing that changes in the LCEA program, or any CEA program, is the cost of the electricity provided.

Electric bills are comprised of two main components: power supply and distribution. It is important to emphasize that this program would cover **only** the power supply portion of the electric bill. Under New Jersey's retail choice regulations, you may purchase power supply from either the electric utility company under its Basic Generation Service ("BGS") tariff rates, or you may purchase your power supply from a Third Party Supplier ("TPS"). The LCEA program seeks to provide savings on the power supply portion of your bill.

Importantly, the delivery and distribution of electricity under this program would continue to remain the same, through the regulated utility (i.e. JCP&L) that serves your home. The utility continues to handle your account, addressing any outages and maintaining service.

➤ **Do I have to be part of the program?**

No. Residential customers who are automatically included in the program have the right to “opt-out.”

However, it is advantageous for all residents to join and remain in the program, as this gives the community the “strength in numbers” to negotiate the best price for consumers. All residents would receive information about the program and be given the opportunity to opt-out.

➤ **Would I be able to Opt-In to the LCEA Program?**

Yes. Residents who have their own third party supply contract and who therefore would not be included in the initial eligibility pool, but would like to join the LCEA, would have the opportunity to do so.

For customers with their own TPS contracts: If you currently have your own third party supply contract, but were considering terminating that contract and joining the LCEA program, it would be very important to first read your existing contracts very carefully, as there may be penalties for terminating the contract prematurely. Some third-party suppliers have automatic “roll over” provisions which renew your contract without affirmative consent or action from you. Please be sure to read your current agreement and if, after comparing your current deal to the LCEA program you decided to join the Township’s program, you would simply need to alert your third-party supplier that you wish to terminate service at the end of your contract term, and then contact the awarded LCEA supplier directly to opt-in to the LCEA program.

Please note that, if you have an existing contract with a supplier not affiliated with the LCEA program, neither the Energy Consultant nor the Township would be responsible for informing your existing supplier or terminating your agreement with them. However, if you have any difficulty with them, please let us know and we would try to help you resolve issues.

➤ **Will I still be able to receive budget billing (Equal Payment Plan)?**

The Township requires that the awarded supplier provide budget billing for their power supply charges to those customers that currently have such arrangements with JCP&L. JCP&L will continue to bill a levelized amount each month for delivery service, and the awarded supplier will also bill a levelized amount each month (through the JCP&L bill) for power supply. Because the selected supplier’s contract price for power supply is lower than the JCP&L price for power supply, your total monthly budget amount (sum of monthly JCP&L delivery service budget amount and awarded supplier’s budget amount for power supply) should be reduced. You may experience a “true-up” on your bill from JCP&L prior to enrollment and then again at the end of the program.

If you do not currently have budget billing with JCP&L but wish to receive an Equal Payment Plan from the awarded supplier for their power supply charges, you will be able to contact the awarded LCEA supplier and request that they establish this service for you.

Budget billing with JCP&L's distribution portion of the bill and the awarded third-party supplier's supply portion of the bill can be complicated. If you are to experience trouble with your budget billing, you may contact JCP&L, the winning supplier, or Gabel Associates for assistance.

➤ **Why is the program set as an opt-out program, rather than an opt-in program?**

The 'opt-out' model for community energy aggregation is established in the State laws and regulations governing these types of programs. The program is configured this way to ensure that a sufficient number of households will participate to obtain a meaningful bid, and to avoid the costly and time-consuming process of having everyone affirmatively sign up for the program. Starting with a large pool of eligible customers provides for an opportunity that attracts suppliers to bid, which creates robust competition for your business and also allows suppliers to reflect bulk purchasing discounts in their price bids.

The aggregation rules incorporate consumer protections, and recognize the logistical challenges of a residential procurement program, while at the same time providing a structure that will attract bidders.

When the retail choice program was originally enacted in NJ in 1999, the rules required that government aggregators be required to obtain a so-called "wet signature" from each residential customer demonstrating the customer's affirmative consent to join. After several years, it was recognized that this "opt in" approach put such a burden on programs that none got off the ground, and the model was changed to "opt-out" for residential customers. Unlike business customers, residential customers represent large numbers and (relatively) small usage/margins for each account. In order for an aggregation of residential customers to work, it is necessary to get large volumes with the lowest transaction costs as possible. This results in the opt-out approach, which gives suppliers a firmer basis for the load they are bidding on, but still provides residential customers with the ability to opt out.

The regulations also require that an aggregation program show savings versus the utility-provided rates. Each residential customer will receive a written notification, informing them of the LCEA contract price, the comparison to the utility price, and their right to opt out. As such, each resident would be fully apprised of all pertinent information necessary to make an informed decision.

➤ **What about power outages?**

Power outages are **not** under the control of the third-party supplier. The delivery system is still under JCP&L's control, and there is no difference in delivery services whether you purchase the power supply from a third-party supplier or from JCP&L under its tariff. In the event of an outage, you would still contact JCP&L.

➤ **What if I have a solar system?**

Customers with solar systems, especially those that are larger in size, typically result in solar production in some months exceeding your monthly electric consumption. In such cases, the monthly utility bill is usually very low.

For these customers, the savings attributable to Energy Aggregation programs would be very minimal on average. It is for this reason that the Township will remove solar customers from the LCEA program.

However, if you believe based upon a review of your past bills that your solar system is NOT producing excess energy that is being 'banked' on your JCP&L bill, you may consider opting-in to the LCEA program. You are encouraged to contact the selected supplier or JCP&L for further information.

➤ **Will the LIHEAP and Lifeline benefit programs for low income residents still apply if I participate in the LCEA?**

LIHEAP (Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program) is a federally funded program, administered by the NJ Department of Community Affairs, to assist low income households with paying their heating bills (whether electric, gas, oil, etc.). There should be no impact of participation in the LCEA program on customers' eligibility. Lifeline or Universal Service programs are state-funded through State taxes and societal benefits charges, again with eligibility based upon several factors tied to income. Bill credits of up to \$225 are provided to assist eligible customers with electric and gas utility bills. The LCEA will provide consolidated billing through the utility; as such the bill credits would be unaffected.