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Clarkstown evaluates cost-, energy-saving measures at town buildings

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NEW CITY - Even workers in Clarkstown town hall aren't perfect when it comes to saving energy.

To correct that, officials studied 10 town buildings to find out how they could contribute to the environment while saving costs.

"We're all guilty of going in a room...leaving at 10 and forgetting to turn the lights off," said Clarkstown Supervisor Alexander Gromack.

Human fallacies aside, officials said they wanted to make a conscious effort to be greener. In November, the town hired a consulting firm called The Daylight Savings Company to evaluate how much electricity, fuel and natural gas the town's buildings use and what officials could do to improve.

The company came back with a report detailing several energy-saving measures, among them upgrading lighting, installing temperature controls and replacing the windows. The report also includes estimates how much each improvement would cost, the potential savings and how long it would take to earn the money back.

"I'm going to even consider doing some of these things in my house," Gromack said. "There are good practices for homeowners."

For instance, it would cost the town \$15,700 to install motion sensors that would automatically turn off the lights when a room is empty. The new system would save the town \$9,345 each year, or, 1.4% of annual energy costs. In 1.7 years, the town would make the \$15,700 back.

The most expensive improvements listed in the report are "improving the building envelope," which involves replacing windows, doors and walls for \$293,880, with a 24-year payback period, and upgrading the heating and air conditioning system, which would cost \$387,525 with a 21-year payback period. If the town followed all eight or so suggestions, it would cost \$981,784 with a 7.9-year payback period.

The study cost \$1,200, which would be reimbursed to the town by the New York State Energy and Research Development Authority if the town implemented any of the recommendations.

"They're all worthwhile projects because, in the end, you would be saving the town a lot of money and, environmentally, you would be using a lot less energy," said Clarkstown Councilwoman Shirley Lasker. "I think it's a no-brainer, really, to get most of it done as soon as possible."

Gromack said the town would upgrade the lighting, install lighting controls and improve temperature controls within the next couple of years.

"We redid town hall about two years ago so the majority of lights are already energy efficient in town

hall," Gromack said. "But in some of the older buildings, like the police station and the community centers, as bulbs burn out, we're just going to get more efficient bulbs."

He said the town would consider more expensive improvements, such as upgrading the heating and air conditioning systems when those items need to be replaced.

Officials will start by replacing the lighting in the gymnasium at the Central Nyack Community Center, said Rob Berdy, the town's purchasing agent.

As they implement the recommendations, officials could receive cash incentives and loan assistance from state government, said Frank Lauricella, a representative from The Daylight Savings Company.

Peggy Kurtz, an Upper Nyack resident who is also a member of the Rockland Sierra Club, said she was glad to hear the town was taking the initiative to be more environmentally friendly.

"It's great they're moving ahead with this and I do hope they will move ahead with the whole package," she said.

Kurtz also said it would be in the town's favor to act quickly.

"We all know that the price of energy will only continue to rise while the cost of making these changes will only get more expensive," she said. "The second reason for moving ahead quickly is equally important and that is global warming."
