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Residents vowing to make Highland Park more energy-friendly

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Members of the community were asked to take the borough's "It's in Our Power Highland Park" campaign pledge to cut energy usage and create a cleaner, healthier environment. During Wednesday's event, a banner highlighting the program was unveiled across Raritan Avenue. / Photo courtesy of Pace Media Productions

Written by Staff Report

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HIGHLAND PARK — Members of the community were asked to take the borough's "It's in Our Power Highland Park" campaign pledge to cut energy usage and create a cleaner, healthier environment.

"This is a campaign that was formed to empower the different sectors of Highland Park — residents, businesses and the government alike — to reduce carbon emissions and in the process save money and save energy," Matthew Kaplan, energy coordinator for the borough, said on Wednesday. "Highland Park has always been a leader in sustainable and environmentally friendly initiatives, and this continues a long and proud tradition that we have as Highland Park residents."

During Wednesday's event, a banner highlighting the program was unveiled across Raritan Avenue.

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Speakers included Highland Park Mayor Gary Minkoff; the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Climate Change Coordinator, Irene Boland Nielson; Middlesex County Freeholder H. James Polos and Randall Solomon, co-director of The Sustainability Institute at The College of New Jersey.

The borough's energy-saving campaign is part of the Climate Showcase Communities grant project funded by the EPA. The goal of the Climate Showcase Communities program is to implement and test a replicable incentive and outreach program that will change the behavior of municipalities and New Jersey residents in ways that support achieving the goals and objectives of New Jersey's Global Warming Response Act and the Sustainable New Jersey Certification Program.

Solomon explained that working with the BPU, Highland Park, along with two other communities, was awarded a \$500,000 Climate Showcase Communities grant.

"New Jersey has a Global Warming Response Act, which calls on us to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions by 80 percent by 2050," Solomon said.

To meet that target, the state as a whole needs to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 4 percent a year, he said. Highland Park has set a 2 percent reduction goal for each year, he said.

If goals are met, Highland Park would become a model for future national energy programs, officials said.

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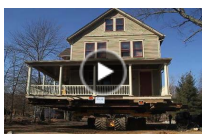
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