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PRESS CONTACTS:

Jeffrey Filiatreault, Howell Township Manager

PHONE (732) 938-4500 Ext 2200

EMAIL JFiliatreault@twp.howell.nj.us

Julie Walsh, press contact for CUC

(609) 828-8981

walsh4words@gmail.com

Howell launches process to cut residents' energy costs

***Township names firm to seek lowest bids from dozens of energy suppliers;
Howell is one of first in N.J. to pursue 'energy aggregation'***

Howell, N.J. --- February 25, 2014 ---Howell officials are working with a leading energy consultant to reduce electric bills for township residents.

The township has contracted with [Commercial Utility Consultants \(CUC\)](#), a 38-year-old firm with offices in Sewell, N.J., to pursue a state-supported process called [Government Energy Aggregation](#).

Under the program, CUC will pool the energy needs of Howell's eligible residents, then seek bids on this pool from more than 30 state-licensed energy suppliers. The suppliers bid their lowest rates in exchange for this potentially large volume of business.

There is no cost to the township or residents for CUC's services, and Howell is not obligated to accept any bids. Residents may also opt out of the cost-saving program at any time.

"We think CUC's program will be a huge win for residents and the township," said Mayor William Gotto. "It will help people save on their power bills, month after month. And it should help fuel the local economy, too, by putting spending money back in people's pockets."

CUC aims to save residents an amount equal to about one to two months of energy costs per year, according to the firm. In other words, if your energy bill is currently \$250 a month, you could save about \$250 - \$400 a year through CUC's program. Most of this savings would come from lower electric rates.

"Bulk buying gives you a much better price than individual residents could get on their own," noted Mayor Gotto. "It's like the difference between warehouse-store and convenience-store prices."

The Township Administration, Mayor and Council are confident that CUC will procure the lowest possible rates and provide the best service, based on the firm's outstanding track record. "They're the oldest in the business. They've helped hundreds of cities and thousands of big companies cut their energy costs. And they do a great job communicating with residents, explaining the program and answering everyone's questions."

Noted CUC representative John Fish: "This is a natural outgrowth of our work helping towns lower their municipal power costs for many years. Now we can provide similar benefits to the residents."

Howell is one of the first municipalities in the state to pursue Government Energy Aggregation, or GEA. The program, created by the N.J. Board of Public Utilities and the Rate Counsel (formerly known as the Ratepayer Advocate), is designed to help people take advantage of energy deregulation and cut energy costs. "Aggregation" refers to customers who form a group to purchase energy.

With GEA, the utility that *serves* a residence will not change. In Howell, for instance, JCP&L would continue to handle customer accounts, respond to outages and maintain services. The only changes would be the energy *supplier* (the company that *makes* the energy for your home), the lower energy costs, and the supplier information on your utility bill.

CUC expects to take rate bids on Howell's behalf from state-licensed energy suppliers through a one-day, online auction in early March. This highly efficient, web-based process – unique to CUC -- enables the greatest possible number of bids, ensuring the lowest rates for consumers.

Township officials will then have the option to accept or reject the lowest bid. If the township accepts the bid, the new rates would go into effect in about 30 days. If the township rejects the bid, no changes will occur.

Under the terms of CUC's planned auction, rates are fixed for either a 12-, 18-, or 24-month term, with no early cancellation fees, penalties or fine print. At the end of this period, another auction could be held. Residents would again have the option to stay with the program or opt out, based on the new rates.

If Howell accepts the lowest bid from the auction, residents would have 30 days to opt out of the program before it starts. You can also opt-out anytime thereafter, without fees or penalties. All residents who have not already switched to a different (third-party) energy supplier will be automatically included.

Outreach Events Planned

In the coming weeks, CUC will hold another public meeting on **Tuesday April 8 at 6 pm** at Howell Township Municipal Building to help educate residents about the program and answer their questions before and during the council meeting. Residents are also welcome to ask questions during any upcoming council meeting.

For more information, please visit njaggregation.us or call CUC at (855) 200-2648. Watch for updates at the township website: www.twp.howell.nj.us

Residents who wish to opt-out of the rate-lowering program will have the opportunity to do so and will receive a notice explaining how to opt out. Additionally, residents can visit njaggregation.us or simply call.