

November 25, 2008



City of Belpre, Ohio to Save \$3 Million Over Ten Years, Thanks to Solar Panels, Energy and Water Efficiency Improvements

Partnership with Ameresco, Inc. overhauls City infrastructure, opens new municipal pool, and brings wastewater treatment facility into EPA compliance

BELPRE, Ohio, Nov. 25 /PRNewswire/ -- The City of Belpre, Ohio, announced today the completion of a two-year-long comprehensive energy conservation and facilities improvement program, which will result in yearly savings and enhanced revenues of nearly \$306,836 over the next decade. The improvements to the City's facilities were completed by Ameresco, Inc., of Framingham, Mass., North America's largest independent energy solutions company.

Improvements made during the program include renovation of the city's aging water treatment plant, energy efficiency upgrades to city facilities and installation of the area's only municipal solar panels, which cover 73% of the electricity needs of Belpre's Municipal Building.

The City of Belpre is a community of 6,600 located in Southern Ohio. Because of a declining population, stagnant growth and low water and sewer rates, the City had long deferred maintenance on facilities such as the wastewater treatment plant, water meters and the municipal swimming pool. As a result, the 1960s era wastewater treatment plant was out of compliance with Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) regulations, the city was losing revenue because of failing 50-year-old water meters, and Belpre's only swimming pool had been closed for several years.

In March 2006, Belpre signed an \$8.5 million contract with Ameresco in an arrangement called "performance contracting" where a portion of the project's costs were paid by projected energy and water savings. To cover the remaining costs of the project, the City of Belpre implemented water and sewer rate increases and received two grants from the State of Ohio.

"It was a tough decision to sign a contract for \$8.5 million in a city of our size, but this has been a great project," said Belpre Mayor Mike Lorentz. "We've eliminated our safety and liability issues with the wastewater treatment plant, and the swimming pool is just a great benefit to our community. We added the swimming pool with the intent to break even, but thanks to its popularity, and its new efficiency, the City actually made money operating the pool this year."

As part of the program other facility upgrades were made to city facilities, including new heating and cooling equipment, energy-efficient lighting, and automatic thermostat controls. Every traffic light in Belpre was replaced with an energy-efficient model that uses two-thirds less energy and shines more brightly.

The City of Belpre now boasts the only municipal solar panels in Southern Ohio, which were installed on the roof of the Municipal Building at no cost to the City. Ameresco paid for half the cost of installing 64 photovoltaic solar panels on Belpre's Municipal Building, with the other half of the cost was covered by an Advanced Energy Fund grant through the Ohio Department of Development, Ohio Energy Office for \$43,600.

"We wanted to install a solar demonstration project in Southern Ohio, and Belpre's Municipal Building was a perfect fit," said Louis Maltezos, Ameresco's Vice President and General Manager for the Midwest Region. "As a result of the new solar panels, Belpre will save 1,200 kilowatt hours a month and reduce its electricity bill by about \$122 a month during the summer."

Another major component of Belpre's infrastructure upgrades was the replacement of every residential and commercial water meter in the City. Ameresco replaced 3,240 meters with new models that give remote, digital readings, offering the City accurate readings in one day rather than requiring employees to read meters over a period of weeks.

"Our old water meters were so inaccurate we were losing more than \$200,000 per year on water rates, and with our limited replacement budget it would have taken more than 100 years to replace them all," said Lorentz. "By replacing our old water meters, we can make sure the City is being paid fairly for the water we supply to our residents."

In addition to enhancing the City's revenue by \$227,949 per year from more accurate water metering, the overall project is estimated to save Belpre \$78,887 each year for the next decade. Ameresco estimates the City will save \$32,352 each year in electricity and natural gas costs alone.

"It has been very rewarding to work with the City of Belpre on upgrading their infrastructure over the past two years," said Maltezos. "The City has made dramatic cuts in their energy and water use, and every resident of Belpre will see benefits from this project."

SOURCE Ameresco, Inc.