

Schools

Energy and Money: Green Savings for Mamaroneck Schools

Energy efficient improvements planned by the district will pay for themselves and help the planet.

By [Sara Kandler](#) | [Email the author](#) | March 5, 2010



The Mamaroneck Union Free School District is planning to embark on an energy savings course that will pay for itself and then start saving the district money.

For a total cost of \$3.5 to \$4 million, the schools should become about 16 percent more energy efficient and much more environmentally friendly. The savings from the various energy upgrades will be used to repay a loan that will be taken out to fund the work.

In response to several questions about how these improvements will affect the district financially, Assistant Superintendent for Business Operations Meryl Rubinstein said that "at a minimum, it will be a wash until the project is paid off."

That news -- which seemed almost too good to be true -- preceded the painstaking review of the superintendent's latest [proposed budget cuts](#) last Tuesday night at Mamaroneck High School.

In an effort to encourage school districts to seek long-term energy and cost savings, the New York State legislature passed an "Energy Performance Contracting" initiative (New York State Energy Law -- Article 9). The legislation allows school districts to finance green projects with operational savings amortized over an agreed-upon repayment period.

The Mamaroneck schools engaged ECG Engineering, LLC, to do a preliminary assessment of the district's energy consumption and needs last fall. The report card was good -- in comparison to some 50 districts across the State, Mamaroneck "is doing a very nice job holding down energy costs," said Kendra McQuilton, who presented the firm's findings on Tuesday.

Still, improvements can be made, and savings can be attained. After executing a request-for-proposal, ECG is recommending Honeywell Building Solutions for the job. Once an in-depth study is completed and the scope

(over)

of the project is defined, the work is planned to take place from July 2011 to September 2012. Not only will Honeywell get paid out of the savings reaped, but the firm guarantees to cover any shortfall.

Some examples of the upgrades planned are lighting retrofits and ceiling replacements, roof replacements, solar panel installations and a pool cover for the Hommocks pool. School board and audience members pointed out that the district should take into account current work being financed by the district's \$22 million bond issued last May.

The environmental impact will include emission reductions equivalent to taking 336 cars off the road, or planting 458 acres of trees annually.

The district plans to finance the project by taking out a 15-year, \$4.6 million loan at an interest rate of 5 percent or less. Beyond meeting loan payments, any extra savings will directly benefit the district.

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