

NOPEC grants hit three more lake communities

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By Cassandra Shofar
CShofar@News-Herald.com

When you're 34 years old, things start falling apart — at least if you're a 1970s building in Willowick.

The town's Municipal Center, at 30435 Lake Shore Blvd., is in need of several updates, but the most prominent is its heating, ventilating and air conditioning system, said Mayor Richard Bonde.

"It's been on its last leg for years," he said. "That building is 34 years old. We're constantly repairing (the HVAC system) and it's constantly leaking. When you hit 34 years old, you start falling apart. We really need new windows ... but rather than replace the windows, we decided just to do this right now."

Thanks to the recent wave of Northeast Ohio Public Energy Council grants, Willowick received a \$120,000 energy conservation grant to pay for the system replacement, Bonde said.

"(The system) has been on borrowed time... and this way, we're not using any more of the taxpayers money, we're using the NOPEC money," he said. "This should cut our energy spending by 25 percent for electrical. The new one is going to be high efficiency. The engineers are finishing up the specs, so it should be up by the spring."

NOPEC awarded a total of \$163,310 in grants to three Lake County communities, including Willowick.

The other two were a \$19,310 grant for Mentor-on-the-Lake to install energy efficient doors and windows at its fire department, and a \$24,000 grant to Wickliffe for energy efficient improvements at its Green Ridge Golf Course club house, according to NOPEC.

"The awards made to these Lake County communities are part of nearly \$16 million in Powering Our Communities grants that NOPEC will be distributing to its 129 member communities throughout the nine northeast Ohio counties it serves," NOPEC officials said in a statement. "The grant money came from FirstEnergy Solutions as part of an agreement the utility struck with NOPEC earlier this year."

Lake County Commissioner Daniel Troy, who serves as the county's representative on the NOPEC board of directors, said this round of grants furthers NOPEC's commitment to helping communities in northeast Ohio lower their energy costs.

"Energy conservation is a major part of NOPEC's commitment to its customers," Troy said in a statement. "As we continue to encourage and teach our customers to be more energy efficient and support capital improvements in our communities, we can lower energy consumption and bring low-cost energy to northeast Ohio."