

OTTAWA COUNTY NATURAL GAS AGGREGATION PROGRAM

The Ottawa County Board of Commissioners will be offering the opportunity for the residents in the unincorporated area of Ottawa County to save money on their natural gas costs by voting at the November election to start a Natural Gas Aggregation Program for residents and small businesses in the unincorporated parts of the county. The Commissioners have, on the July 26, 2022 agenda, a resolution to place an issue on the November 8, 2022 ballot to ask voters to approve a natural gas aggregation program.

Ohio Law allows political subdivisions such as Ottawa County to form aggregated buying groups to purchase electric generation and natural gas supply on behalf of their citizens. By bringing citizens together, through the county's aggregation program, the residents of the unincorporated area of the county gain buying power and, thereby, are able to negotiate a better price for their electric and natural gas than each household would be able to individually.

The county previously received voter approval in May, 2010 to establish and currently provides an electric aggregation program which has saved county participants over \$7.6 million on their electricity costs since that program began.

The county is now choosing to offer a natural gas aggregation program which also requires voter approval before it can be established. Once passed, all eligible residents and small businesses (who use less 5000 CCF of natural gas) will be enrolled in the program and begin receiving the discounted natural gas pricing under the program. Residents do not need to do anything to join the program. However, anyone who does not want to participate in the program can opt out in the beginning simply by returning a form that will be mailed to all eligible members or at any other time. There are absolutely no costs or penalties for leaving the program at any time.

Residents in the program will still receive bills from Columbia Gas of Ohio and will not receive a separate bill from their natural gas supplier. After the program has been approved by the voters the Commissioners will hold two Public Hearings to explain the program and answer any questions there may be. When the Commissioners have approved a contract with the supplier who won the contract through a competitive bidding process, that supplier will send out an opt out letter to all eligible residents and small businesses.

A natural gas aggregation program will not only provide the citizens of Ottawa County with savings on their natural gas costs, but also provide some peace of mind. Many citizens receive phone calls from suppliers or even are visited at their door by sales people looking to sign them up for different energy cost savings programs. Many times the terms of these programs are long, technical, and confusing in nature and without careful review residents can be lead into a program that starts out with a very low rate that then balloons into a much higher rate after a few months and costs the person much more than they thought it would. These people often times are also unknowingly auto-renewed at a rate much higher than what their previous program was.

If approved by the voters, the Ottawa County Commissioners are committed to providing a natural gas aggregation program that offer significant savings below the "Apples to Apples" comparison for natural gas, at a fixed price, and with no hidden cost increases built in as they are currently providing through the county's electric aggregation program.