

Door County, Wisconsin

Door County signs on for PACE program

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Door County last week signed on as a participant in a program to provide low-interest, long-term loans to businesses on the peninsula looking for dollars to improve energy efficiency, switching to renewable energy and water conservation improvements.

The PACE program – an acronym for Property Assessed Clean Energy – provides the mechanism for businesses to borrow money from local lenders for installing energy-efficient lighting, heating and other projects, using the savings generated to repay the loan.

PACE provides coordination among businesses, government, lenders and contractors, according to Jon Hochkammer, outreach manager for the Wisconsin Counties Association, addressing the Door County Board last week Tuesday. Hochkammer was Manitowoc County Board Chairman for eight years and is currently the mayor of Verona.

“Not only does it (PACE) do economic development, but it promotes sustainability,” Hochkammer said. “More and more counties and villages and cities are getting involved in sustainability issues.”

In addition, he said, “There are no federal, state, or local dollars involved in the program. It’s a voluntary program between the property owner and a lender.”

“I have not found a downside,” Hochkammer said.

Jason Stringer, senior manager of Clean Energy Finance with the nonprofit Wisconsin Energy Conservation Corporation, said 44 states have similar programs. However, he said, Wisconsin doesn’t provide funding for residential energy saving efforts that some other states do.

The PACE Program is a “financing tool,” Stringer said. Door County would not have any costs in adopting the program.

The only reason the county board had to adopt a resolution and ordinance to participate in PACE, Stringer said, was because, “financing is secured by a special charge, which is a form of tax assessment.”

The County Board’s Finance Committee recommended adopting the program after reviewing it beginning in April. The vote at the June 27 County Board meeting was unanimous for joining PACE.

Door is the 20th Wisconsin county to join the program. Manitowoc, Sheboygan, Ozaukee and Racine are other counties on the Lake Michigan shore in the program. Dane, Marathon, La Crosse and the counties along Lake Superior – Douglas, Bayfield and Ashland — are some of the other PACE counties.

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