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Renewable energy for city jump-started by Murray

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Mayor Timothy P. Murray led a local contingent to Boston last Wednesday to look at renewable energy sources used by Local 103, International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, that provide electricity to its training facility. Mr. Murray said the trip was put together in cooperation with the Regional Environmental Council. He said the local group wanted to see firsthand ways in which the city could use renewable energy sources, especially for some of its larger public projects such as the new vocational school now under construction and the North High replacement school to be constructed.

He pointed out the School Department spends \$600,000 a year alone to cover its electricity costs at South High Community School. With the skyrocketing cost of fuel oil and electricity, he said, it is in the city's best interest to take a good hard look at using renewable energy sources.

He said the IBEW training facility in Dorchester gets all its power from solar panels and a 150-foot-high windmill. The

mayor said the windmill, which was built by the IBEW, generates enough power to provide electricity to 35 homes.

"These are things we should definitely be considering as part of any future public project we do," Mr. Murray said.

The mayor said he and Councilor-at-Large Joseph M. Petty intend to file an order for the council's August meeting relative to the use of renewable energy alternatives.

Joining Mr. Murray on the trip to Boston were Peggy Middaugh, executive director of the Regional Environmental Council; Carissa Williams, energy coordinator of the Regional Environmental Council; Lara Hoke, program director for Massachusetts Interfaith Power & Light; and Leo Miller, business manager of Local 96, IBEW.

Earlier this year, Worcester became the first city in the state to set a goal of using renewable energy sources to meet 20 percent of its municipal electricity needs by 2010 when the City Council unanimously adopted the "20 Percent by 2010 **Clean Energy** Resolution." It calls for greater use of electricity generated from clean sources of power, such as wind, water and the sun, instead of electricity generated from coal, oil, natural gas and nuclear power.

The City Council last week approved transferring the jurisdiction of the historic Fire Alarm and Telegraph Building at 203 Park Ave. from the School Department to the Executive Office of the City Manager.

Title to the parcel became available after the School Committee

declared the property surplus.

The building, which was constructed in 1925, used to serve as the central relay station for the Fire Department's alarm system. The Fire Department used the building for decades before it was taken over by the School Department to house maintenance equipment.

Through the efforts of Preservation Worcester, the building ended up on a list as one of the 10 most endangered historic resources in Massachusetts for 2004. It became just the third Worcester landmark to end up on that list since it was created 12 years ago.

The building was designed by Worcester's Lucius W. Briggs, who also drew up plans for the old South High School, the Worcester Country Club and the

Memorial Auditorium in Lincoln Square.

No word out of City Hall about plans for the building.

The city is seeking a \$96,224 Economic Development Initiative - Special Project grant from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development in support of the project to restore the old Loew's Poli Palace Theatre, which later went on to become the Showcase Cinemas, at 2-16 Southbridge St.

The grant is being sought on behalf of the Worcester Center for the Performing Arts, which wants to renovate the building and transform it into the Grand Palace Theatre, which would offer major Broadway shows, concerts, recitals, comedy acts and family productions, and attract more than 170,000 patrons into the downtown each year.

City Manager Michael V. O'Brien said the grant being sought by the city has the backing of U.S. Rep. James P. McGovern, D-Worcester. He said the money will allow the Worcester Center for the Performing Arts to begin renovations and improvements to the building.

The manager said initial renovations will include removing the

exterior of the building, restoring the former facade and

purchasing interior fixtures and furniture. The total cost of the renovation project is \$17 million.

"The Worcester Center for the Performing Arts is currently securing a loan guarantee with the city through the HUD Section 108 Loan Guarantee program; finalizing other grants and historic and new market tax credits; and obtaining additional financing through public and quasi-public agencies and private sources as they continue to move this significant downtown revitalization project forward," Mr. O'Brien said.

A group reportedly interested in developing the cleared-out Wyman-Gordon Co. property near Kelley Square has pulled out.

Assistant City Manager Julie A. Jacobson told the City Council last week Wyman-Gordon recently informed the city that it was no longer negotiating with its preferred developer. She said the developer failed to secure the key tenant required to make its development proposal feasible.

Ms. Jacobson added Wyman-Gordon has also hired Cushman & Wakefield to market the 18-acre property and attempt to identify a qualified developer.

"The city has offered its support and assistance to Wyman-Gordon and Cushman & Wakefield in marketing the site," she said.