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Local Governments in Maryland now have the option to own and maintain their street lights

Governor O'Malley signed SB423 and HB875 into law earlier this year and it became effective on June 1st. The new law provides substantial financial benefits by offering substantial savings on street light maintenance and energy costs. Over the next ten years, local governments in the Pepco service territory alone could save \$45 million. The new law also benefits public safety by potentially providing faster service to repair broken street lights or upgrade or install new ones. In the past, local governments in Maryland did not have a choice of service provider and were limited to monopoly utility rates, choices and service. Municipal ownership of street lighting has worked successfully in other jurisdictions including Washington DC, Pennsylvania, Connecticut, New York and Massachusetts. Many thanks to the Maryland Municipal League staff, the sponsoring legislators, municipal officials and other supporters who contributed to make this a reality.

The Town of Kensington has contacted Laura Kittel of the Maryland Department of Assessment and Taxation. We are awaiting her response to determine the assessed value of utility owned street lighting within our Town so that we can consider negotiating a change to municipal ownership and maintenance. Pepco has provided Kensington with a map containing a complete inventory of street light locations, type and wattage as they have promised to provide to municipalities.

Pepco has made Induction Street Lights generally available

Pepco recently gained approval to add induction as an available type of light source for street lighting customers within their service territory. Induction is a newer type of lighting that offers high energy efficiency, excellent color rendering and low maintenance costs due to an extremely long service life. The City of Frederick has used induction lamps in their city owned street lights for 14 years without a single bulb having to be replaced. Garrett Park, Chevy Chase View and Takoma Park were the pioneers in the Pepco service area and installed decorative induction street lights several years ago under a temporary pricing arrangement. In their tariff, Pepco offers induction in 55 Watt and 85 Watt varieties in a decorative Holophane fixture.

Pepco upgrades web site to enable reporting of street light outages

At the urging of municipal officials, Pepco has upgraded their web site to allow citizens to more easily report street light outages. In the past, Pepco's telephone system had made

it very difficult to report outages.

Mercury Vapor street lights soon to be officially obsolete

Per the federal energy policy act of 2005, ballasts for mercury vapor lamps may no longer be manufactured or imported after January 1, 2008. In the Pepco service territory alone, there are approximately 25,000 utility owned mercury vapor street lights. Mercury Vapor is a poor choice for outdoor lighting applications including street lighting. Compared to other types of lamps, mercury vapor wastes a great deal of energy, requires costly and frequent maintenance, provides poor light quality and adds toxic materials to our waste stream. And many of the fixtures waste additional energy because they send light sideways and skyward rather than onto streets and sidewalks. It is good public policy to begin planning for the replacement of mercury vapor lights with more energy efficient types. Pepco has not yet announced their change out plans. However upgrades of utility owned street lights has been a costly and slow process in the past. Upgrading to efficient street lights can be accomplished much more quickly and cost effectively under municipal ownership that is now permitted thanks to the new law mentioned above.

Older types of Metal Halide lights obsolete in Maryland

Governor O'Malley signed into law earlier this year the Maryland Energy Efficiency Standards Act of 2007 (SB674) that banned new installations of many electrical products including the older, inefficient, "probe start" types of metal halide lights.

Montgomery County considering outdoor lighting rules

Council President Marilyn Praisner has introduced legislation (bill 4-07) that would greatly reduce energy waste and preserve the night skies by setting outdoor lighting standards. In the current draft of the legislation municipal street lights would need to be brought into compliance within 5 years. Inefficient lights such as mercury vapor would need to be changed out. And street light fixtures would need to be replaced with types that minimize glare and uplight. The cost of upgrading to compliant street lighting has been greatly reduced by the state law mentioned above that enables municipal ownership and maintenance of street lighting. The Mayor and Council of Kensington have gone on record in supporting this bill.

Regards,
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Town of Kensington

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