

Daily American

7-8-2017

Berlin unveils \$2.55M generator system

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After about three years of work and planning, Berlin Borough unveiled its \$2.55 million generator system, which officials said will reduce power costs and serve as a backup during emergencies.

About 20 residents and officials from Berlin and Somerset County took part in the ceremony under a tent in the field by the generators. The officials counted down and the generators started up via a remote switch in Wake Forest, North Carolina.

"We're supporting all of Berlin right now," said Berlin Borough Executive Secretary Tom Jones as the generators hummed.

But the Saturday ceremony wasn't the first time the generators powered Berlin. Jones said they were used in June during peak electric use and on Tuesday during a FirstEnergy emergency shutoff.

"It was completely seamless," he said.

Berlin Borough Electric Committee Chairman Eric Glotfelty said that the generators will pay for themselves in 10 years.

"It means a lot to me we were able to accomplish such a big project and know that the outcome will be appreciated by all," he said.

Berlin has owned its own power system since 1903, using proceeds from the system to fund borough amenities such as street sweepers, garbage trucks and other equipment in lieu of tax dollars. Berlin is one of the few boroughs in Pennsylvania with 0 mills of property tax.

"We are envied by so many boroughs and municipalities across the country," Jones said.

Somerset County Commissioner James T. Yoder said that the project shows what a community can do.

"Electric rates are something we have to think about," he said. "You came together to be on the cutting edge."



Somerset County Commissioner James T. Yoder speaks at the opening ceremony while commissioners John Vatajuk and Gerald Walker, and Berlin Borough Executive Secretary Tom Jones look on.