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## **Troup County installs solar panels, seeks energy efficiency**

(May 27, 2011) The latest in a wave of improvements sought by the Troup County Board of Commissioners to enhance energy efficiency and improve facilities at the Troup County Correctional Institute can be viewed from the highway. Twelve solar panels installed in February don't only catch your eye as you travel Hamilton Road; the system with which they are connected saves the County about \$6,800 per year in energy costs.



Workers in February installed this and 11 more solar panels on the roof at the Troup County Correctional Institute in an effort to reduce energy costs.

Troup County entered into an agreement last fall with Linc Mechanical of Alpharetta to provide energy efficiency measures in two of the county's largest buildings, the Correctional Institute (CI) on Hamilton Road and the nearby Sheriff's Office and Jail on Sam Walker Drive.

"The jail is 15 years old, so the timing there is perfect," said County Manager Mike Dobbs. "The original part of the Correctional Institute is approaching 100 years old. There's a lot to be gained from updating both of these buildings with energy savings in mind."

Problem issues at the jail and CI include outdated and inefficient HVAC equipment, toilets and fixtures; high humidity in inmate dormitories; and outdated lighting. Updating the buildings with energy-efficient systems will provide taxpayer savings, according to Dobbs.

The most obvious enhancement to date is the addition of solar panels at the CI. The 12 panels are part of a single point solar domestic hot water system that uses heat from the sun to warm water at the facility, thereby reducing energy costs related to hot water heating which previously utilized a traditional gas boiler system.

“When analyzing how the Correctional Institute uses energy, for what purpose, and the time of day, the appropriate technology was installed,” according to Renee Warrick, owner of Clean Green 4 West Georgia Solar Electric Systems of LaGrange. “Solar thermal works well in this application as an abundance of hot water is needed during the day. With these changes, Troup County will have a return on the investment in a short time.”



Solar panels atop the Troup County Correctional Institute are part of an energy efficiency overhaul projected to reduce utility bills and save taxpayers money for many years. Discussing the sustainable energy project are, from left, Correctional Institute Warden Dexter Wells; Renee Warrick, owner of Clean Green 4 West Georgia Solar Electric Systems in LaGrange; Richard Dobbs and Todd Pierson of Linc Mechanical; and Troup County Manager Mike Dobbs.

While solar panels are evident to passersby, additional enhancements also are expected to reduce energy costs. These include installation of 1,785 energy efficient light fixtures; upgraded HVAC system with 55 new pieces of equipment, including high efficient rooftop heating and air conditioning units; replacement of 163 toilets; retrofitting of fixtures on 140 sinks and 84 shower heads; upgrading six industrial washers with an ozone laundry system; and utilization of a computerized energy management system in concert with the a/c system to schedule cut-on and -off and automatically adjust temperature.

Along with installation, Linc Mechanical will provide maintenance for the next three years, including program administration, repair and replacement labor, preventive maintenance and emergency service.

Currently, annual costs for electricity, gas and water at the jail and CI run approximately \$625,500, according to Dobbs. For the first year facilities operate with upgrades, Linc Mechanical guarantees energy savings of \$204,000 and operational savings of about \$94,570, bringing the total first-year savings to \$298,916. Such savings would cut combined energy costs at the two facilities almost in half.

Cost of the total project is \$2,995,148 and includes equipment replacement, controls, water conservation measures, renewable energy upgrades, lighting and more. Average savings over the next 12 years is estimated by Linc to continue at about \$300,000 per year with the project paying for itself by the end of the 12<sup>th</sup> year, according to Todd Pierson, general manager of Linc Mechanical.

“Facilities like these use a lot of energy by definition, making them more expensive to operate, but there’s more opportunity for savings as well,” said Pierson. “We find out where the issues are, address them, and guarantee energy savings. If there’s a period when there are no savings, the company reimburses.”

Linc Mechanical will provide detailed annual energy audits to determine savings along with ongoing utility analysis and training as needed, according to Pierson who said immediate savings will come during the construction period with “substantial savings realized” after all installations are complete in August.

“We help County governments by creating smart buildings that optimize energy,” said Pierson. “Our ‘green’ solutions are good for the environment and savings are guaranteed.”

Prior to partnering with Linc Mechanical, County administrators quizzed personnel from LaGrange College, which hired Linc in 2006 to perform similar measures.

“We met with them and verified that they were saving energy and money,” said Dobbs.

LaGrange College CFO Marty Pirrman said the college has experienced energy savings since retrofitting seven buildings with upgraded HVAC systems and lighting.

“We have seen a reduction in usage and costs,” said Pirrman. “The leadership team [at Linc] is responsive and we have a good relationship with them.”

Troup County commissioners look forward to the same outcome.

“By upgrading or replacing these outdated mechanical systems with green technologies, we not only reduce energy consumption, we save taxpayers money,” said Dobbs. “The beauty of this program is that it ultimately is self-funding, with the savings in energy costs paying for the upgrades. It’s not a temporary fix but an endeavor that will pay for itself and provide savings for citizens for many years to come.”