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Rebates available for water-savers

By Cathryn Keefe O'Hare/Danvers Herald

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Danvers - Danvers residents may be able to obtain rebates for purchasing water-saving fixtures, under a new program unveiled to selectmen Tuesday night.

The program is retroactive to July 1, 2008. It applies to water-saving toilets, washing machines, faucets and showerheads, and offer residents rebates ranging from \$300 to \$50.

Residents must prove they are current customers of the Danvers Water Division. They must bring in receipts for the purchases. They must purchase only faucets or toilets that are on the "WaterSense" list (see www.epa.gov/watersense). The washing machine must be on the CEE (Consortium for Energy Efficiency list (www.ceel.org). Showerheads must be rated less than 2.0 gallons per minute.

There are a number of other qualifiers, including proof the items are installed at the customer's address.

Department of Public Works Director David Lane explained the reasoning for the latter: they are so easy to install, they could be uninstalled easily, thus duping the town of its money.

The water withdrawal permit issued by the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection requires the town to institute a water-saving plan, in addition to its reduction of the amount of water the town can withdraw from the Ipswich River, which is considered one of the most endangered rivers in the country.

As a result, the town now requires residential developers of four units or more to pay a water mitigation fee. In addition, all new commercial development or reuses of current commercial properties that engender more water usage must also pay the water mitigation fee.

Town Meeting, for purposes of instituting the program, established a \$150,000 fund for the rebate program this fiscal year, Lane told selectmen. The fund right now has \$270,000, because of payments from Massachusetts General Hospital/North Shore Medical for its new facility on Endicott Street, Brightview Assisted Living on Endicott and Beverly Hospital at Danvers on Maple Street, as well as a number of smaller projects.

“There are not a lot of big projects on the horizon,” warned Lane, which could slow down the program. The rebates will be provided until the fund runs out, he said.

But, more optimistically, the town is exploring a commercial rebate program and an irrigation rebate program, to encourage additional water savings, Lane said.

Pam Irwin in the Department of Public Works is available to help residents. Her number is 978-762-0254, ext. 633.

Resident Mark Zuberek applauded the program, calling it an “investment,” but one that will require “a cutback in development,” an issue that many in town have argued is the main culprit in the town’s water paucity issues.

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