

The News-Herald *A Heritage Newspaper*

City joins climate-control group

By Jim Kasuba
The News-Herald

On Wednesday, U.S. Sen. Barbara Boxer (D-Calif.) stood next to an ancient boiler from Levittown, N.Y., and the high-efficiency boiler that is replacing it.

The senator's photo opportunity was to make the point that local communities can make a big difference in halting climate change.

That's one of the goals of **Climate Communities**, a national advocacy organization seeking federal resources, tools and incentives to support local government action to combat climate change.

The city of Wyandotte is one of the group's newest members.

The city indirectly had someone representing it at the event.

"The reason we joined is through our affiliation with the Ferguson Group," said Melanie McCoy, Wyandotte Municipal Services general manager.

Climate Communities is managed by the Ferguson Group, a Washington, D.C., government firm with 25 years of experience in federal advocacy, coalition building, community revitalization and environmental and energy innovation.

McCoy credits the Ferguson Group for its role in helping the city to obtain federal funding for environmentally friendly projects.

"They were the ones that actually helped us find Department of Energy opportunities on a brownfield grant for our wind turbines," she said.

The highest-profile environmental project the city has going is the Wyandotte Green Windpower on Brownfields Project, which will involve the installation of as many as five wind turbines on contaminated property near the Detroit River.

The city has landed two \$1 million grants specifically for the wind turbines project, which should be getting off the ground in the near future.

"The Ferguson Group said they are trying to share the green initiative between communities so we can all learn what everybody else is doing,"

McCoy said. "Hopefully, that will help us all get a little bit smarter and better."

A listing of members represented in the **Climate Communities** events in Washington included mostly cities and counties in California, Virginia, Florida, Maryland and a handful of other states. Wyandotte and Washtenaw County were the only two groups from Michigan.

However, the Local Government Climate Change Summit kicked off Wednesday morning with a man who is no stranger to Downriver.

U.S. Rep. John Dingell (D-15th District), whose district includes part of Downriver, began the day's events by hosting a breakfast at the Rayburn House Office Building. Dingell serves as chairman of the U.S. House Energy and Commerce Committee.

The organization emphasizes that local government action is critical to addressing America's climate change challenge.

Members argue that localities have the ability to foster major reductions in greenhouse gas emissions through green buildings, clean transportation, renewable energy and sustainable community development.

Cities and counties also are the first responders to the impacts of climate change — dealing with drought, water shortages, wildfires, flooding, rising sea levels, infrastructure disruption and other potential effects.

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