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**FRANKLIN COUNTY COMMISSIONERS ANNOUNCE ENERGY WORKS ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND GREEN ENERGY INITIATIVE**

Today the Franklin County Commissioners approved a new initiative to help keep Central Ohio green and attract new businesses to our area while encouraging existing companies to stay or expand. The program, called Energy Works, is a low-interest revolving loan fund that will make money available to businesses, local governments, schools, and non-profits in Franklin County for energy efficient upgrades.

During their General Session meeting this morning, the Commissioners approved committing \$1.5 million to the project each year for at least the next five years and, because the awards are loans and the fund revolves, it will grow and continue in perpetuity. Energy-efficient upgrades could include renewable power generation such as natural gas, biomass, wind or solar, fuel cells, waste energy recovery, high efficiency HVAC, smart lighting, or anything else that benefits the environment and community, and is feasible.

Energy Works is a partnership with the Columbus-Franklin County Finance Authority, which will administer the program, and can be used on new construction projects or retrofits to existing buildings. The Finance Authority is a public agency that facilitates capital investment in Central Ohio, and works in partnership with traditional lending institutions to spur growth and encourage economic development in the region.

“Sustainability and energy efficiency are important for all of us and when the opportunity arises to innovate a program that combines job creation with environmental responsibility, I’m going to be actively engaged in bringing that program to fruition every time,” said Board of Commissioners President, Marilyn Brown. “This program is the result of action by an incredibly talented team which, over the course of the past year, has convened experts, undertaken extensive discussions and planning, and has brought forward a well thought-out model that our community can be proud of. Certainly, with any innovation comes risk but I am confident that as a result of moving this program forward today, Franklin County is better positioned to lead in the areas of job creation and environmental sustainability.”

The terms of Energy Works loans will include below-market-rate interest, and will depend on the expected benefits of the project and the borrower’s credit. As part of the application process, each project will undergo an energy audit to determine its suitability for funding.

“The Finance Authority is proud to partner with Franklin County on its Energy Works initiative. Providing low interest financing for energy efficiency improvements by Franklin County building owners helps our community be more sustainable and competitive. Our team has the credit, technical and marketing expertise necessary to make the program a success. We look forward to building on our strong

partnership with Franklin County,” said Jean Carter Ryan, President, Columbus-Franklin County Finance Authority.

Energy Works is the latest in the Commissioners Smart Works suite of economic development programs funded with proceeds of the temporary sales tax increase that was approved in 2013. Previously, the Commissioners announced Infrastructure Works, which provides low interest loans for local governments improving infrastructure to attract and encourage business in Central Ohio, and People Works, an initiative to help low-income residents transition from public assistance to living-wage employment.

“Economic development is hard work,” said Commissioner John O’Grady, who led the announcement of Infrastructure Works. “But Franklin County is an attractive place to do business, and we’re thinking outside the box for innovative ways to help boost both job creation and environmental stewardship. Energy Works is a good program that will help keep Franklin County growing.”

“Promoting energy independence, ensuring that vulnerable families and middle class families both thrive, and working collaboratively and strategically with the private sector, have been hallmarks of my public service. As well, ensuring that taxpayer dollars are used in an open, fair, and objective process remain fundamental steps in my policy decisions as I seek to assure public confidence. I have voted for this program today, and I look forward to this transparency and fundamental fairness of which I have been assured,” said Commissioner Paula Brooks.

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