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Virginia Energy Awards \$2 Million to Richlands for Innovative Project Lowering Energy Costs

Big Stone Gap, Va- The town of Richlands will receive \$2 million dollars toward constructing a natural gas fired turbine and generator. This micro powerplant will generate five megawatts of electricity, enough to supply the town's 2,500 utility customers. The funding is from the Virginia Department of Energy's (Virginia Energy) Abandoned Mine Land Economic Revitalization (AMLER) grant. AMLER is a federally funded program and is administered by Virginia Energy.

"This project makes energy more affordable by saving the average town resident \$1,500 each year," **stated Governor Glenn Youngkin**. "It's an innovative approach for this unique town utility and turns a negative into a positive by transforming land that was historically mined for coal."

"As demand for electricity grows in the United States, coupled with the retirement of coal and natural gas power plants, Americans yearn for access to cheap and affordable energy," **said U.S. Congressman Morgan Griffith**. "The construction of a natural gas-fired turbine and generator will satisfy the energy demands of the Richlands community."

"Innovative projects that keep energy affordable are crucial not only for economic development, but to utility customers across the Commonwealth," **said Virginia Energy Director Glenn Davis**. "The town of Richlands found a solution to rising energy costs by generating their own electricity and should be commended for finding the funding opportunity through this agency's AMLER program to support that initiative."

"I am pleased to support opportunities like this in my district and am glad the AMLER Advisory Committee shared the vision when approving this project," **said Virginia**



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Senator Travis Hackworth. “The town’s project shows their commitment toward ensuring reliable and affordable energy to its businesses and citizens.”

The AMLER Advisory committee met August 12th and chose the project for funding. The town has provided electricity to its businesses and citizens since 1922 and applied for the funding after suffering from recent rate increases.

“With rates expected to increase within the next five years, we knew we had to do something for our citizens and businesses,” **said Richlands Town Manager Jason May.** “We saw an opportunity in the AMLER funding to help us make our vision a reality and we are grateful for this resource that will help us keep energy affordable in our town.”

The town, located within Tazewell County, will purchase, install and implement the use of the natural gas fired turbine and generator. The natural gas will interconnect with nearby pipeline infrastructure for convenient access to gas supply resulting in lower costs. Affordable energy is a recruiting tool for economic development.

Since the AMLER program’s inception in 2017, Virginia Energy has received \$10 to \$11.7 million annually for economic development on abandoned mine lands. The program is administered by the Office of Surface Mining and Reclamation Enforcement. The grants are managed by Virginia Energy’s Abandoned Mine Land (AML) program.

[Virginia Energy’s AML program](#) was created in 1981 and is federally funded to reclaim issues left behind by coal mining that occurred before 1977.

The AMLER Advisory committee is made up of local delegates and economic development leaders. Voting members include Director Davis, Virginia Energy Director of Coal Programs Randy Moore, Congressman Morgan Griffith’s District Director Josh Hess, Virginia Senator Todd Pillion, Virginia Senator Travis Hackworth, Virginia Delegate Terry Kilgore, Virginia Delegate Will Morefield, LENOWISCO Planning District Executive Director Duane Miller, Cumberland Plateau Planning District Executive Director Scott Wampler and Southwest Virginia Energy Research and Development Authority Chairman Mike Quillen. Non-voting members include InvestSWVA Director Will Payne and Virginia Coalfield Economic Development Authority Executive Director Jonathan Belcher.

