

MIDDLETOWN

Township rehires grant applications writer

Hiring an engineering firm's professional grant application writer last year paid for itself many times over, officials said.

By CHRIS ENGLISH COURIER TIMES

After helping to get more than \$800,000 for Middletown in 2007, a professional grant applications writer has been rehired by the township for this year.

The township will pay the CMX engineering firm, formerly Schoor DePalma, \$90 an hour this year for the services of the firm's grant applications writer, Lori Thompson. The estimated cost for the year is \$32,400, said township Manager Richard Gestrich.

Last year, CMX received \$30,369 for Thompson's services, he said.

"I don't think we'll get to that [\$32,400] this year," said Gestrich. "Last year, Lori spent a lot of time just getting up to speed with township operations and also put in a lot of free hours. The hours spent on getting up to speed should not be necessary this year."

Gestrich and the township supervisors said Thompson was instrumental last year in obtaining three grants totaling \$818,500.

The township received a \$675,000 grant from the Bucks County Redevelopment Authority with the money coming from the Philadelphia Park Casino. The authority handed out \$2.6 million in casino grants last year to several municipalities that border Bensalem and are impacted by the casino. Middletown's grant was the largest. The township will use the grant to help fund the renovation and expansion of one of its fire companies, the William Penn station on Bristol-Oxford Valley Road.

Thompson also helped to get a \$43,500 grant from the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission that will be used for a study on how to reinvigorate the Midway shopping center on New Falls Road. A \$100,000 grant from the Federal Emergency Management Agency will be used for equipment, among other things, at the Langhorne-Middletown Fire Co., another fire department that serves the township.

The township should hear in the spring about eight more grants Thompson has sought for Middletown, Gestrich said.

"She has been really good, a definite help," he said. "She is very familiar with government grants, the application requirements and the whole process and does a very good job following up and shepherding these grant applications along."

Township supervisors Chairwoman Lisa Pflaumer said she was skeptical when the township first hired Thompson, but has come around. The hiring has proven well worth the investment, Pflaumer said.

"I was the biggest critic of hiring CMX for this," Pflaumer told Thompson at Tuesday's meeting, where the CMX renewal was approved by a unanimous vote. "I will now swallow that big lump in my throat for being a critic and say thank you for all the work you've done."