

Bilingual notice reflects county's Amish population

By FELICIA A. PETRO Allied News Senior Reporter | Posted: Sunday, October 18, 2015 7:00 am

MERCER COUNTY – Danke.

Public notices for allocations of the Pennsylvania Community Development Block Grant to Mercer County communities will now be in both English and German.

The bilingual notice is being required by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, which is what funds CDBG. The Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development administers the money.

“A couple of years ago, DCED came to the jurisdictions and said to look at census data to reach out to folks who speak a different language,” said Chris Conti, senior planner with the Mercer County Regional Planning Commission.

In Mercer County, 2010 census data showed that more than 5 percent of the residents in East Lackawannock, Lackawannock, Fairview, Lake and Wilmington townships speak German as their primary language, Conti said – which is assumed to be Amish residents.

The 5 percent is why the state is requiring the bilingual public notice for the CDBG money this year, Conti added.

Conti was at the Grove City Borough Building last week for a public hearing for the borough’s annual CDBG money.

He said it’s the first year the regional planning commission administered the application process for the CDBG funds for all municipalities in the county at the request of the county commissioners – except for Sharon, Hermitage and Farrell.

“The rest did their own in the past, now it’s all with the Mercer County Regional Planning Commission,” he noted.

CDBG money is used to benefit moderate-to-low income residents and emergency services in some manner.

The state’s Department of Community and Economic Development is requiring counties within the state to apply for the money on behalf of the municipalities, so the process has fewer hands involved, Conti said.

The Herald published the public notice in English and it cost about \$350; it cost more in German for last week’s public hearings, he said.

Conti said a second notice was to be published for a public hearing to bring all of the CDBG municipalities together – and solicit ideas – from the public at the county courthouse at 9 a.m. Thursday.