

City to aid small businesses in energy buying Aims to lower bills

By Christine McConville | Friday, November 14, 2008 | <http://www.bostonherald.com> | **Business & Markets**

Bob Webber has seen a lot in 35 years at his family-owned hardware store in Allston.

But even he was stunned when he opened his electric bills this summer.

Keeping Model Hardware cool for his customers and employees cost him \$5,000 a month.

Now, thanks to a new city program designed to help small business owners work together to negotiate lower energy costs, he thinks he won't have such a shock this coming summer.

Yesterday, Webber opened the doors his Harvard Avenue shop to some 70 people, including many neighborhood merchants, so Mayor **Thomas M. Menino** could explain the program to others.

Boston Buying Power will give small business owners "the peace of mind that comes from long-term price certainty and budget stability, (and) access to energy efficiency programs," Menino said.

Taylor Consulting and Contracting, a national utility management firm based in Pennsylvania, will serve as the city's small business energy broker and consultant. It will also connect participating businesses to programs and services that reduce energy consumption.

Yesterday, Taylor Chief Operating Officer Scott Stiner said the initiative will give "customers incredible benefits ranging from low pricing, to long-term rate stability, to the most advanced system of energy and utility management tools and services."

At the announcement, Tom Devlin, owner of Devlin's Restaurant in Brighton and the Warren Tavern in Charlestown, said he'll likely sign up.

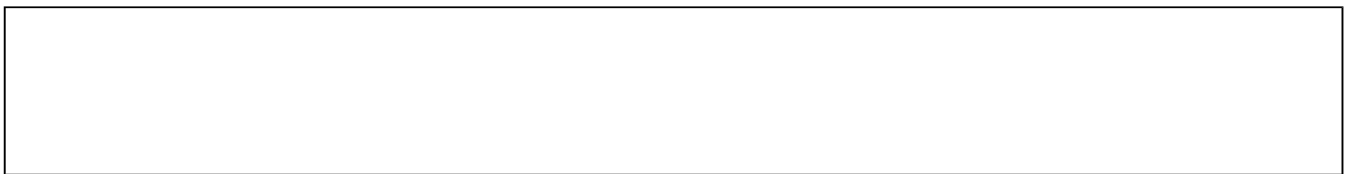
In the last three years, the utility bills for his shops have spiked.

"It's become a major bill," he said of his monthly electric and gas fees.

This new program could change that, he said.

"Hopefully," he said as he scanned the crowded hardware store, "there will be power in the numbers."

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