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COG seeking local contractors for Rails-To-Trails project

By **JIM DINO**

jimdino@standardspeaker.com

Local construction firms are being contacted to see what their individual interest would be in building the first part of the Hazleton Rails-To-Trails project.

Bob Skulsky, executive director of the Greater Hazleton Area Civic Partnership and Mountain Council of Governments (M-COG) – the organizations promoting the trail – said he is preparing a Request For Proposals (RFP) to send out to contractors to build the first quarter, or the first four miles of the proposed 16.2-mile trail.

Skulsky said the advertisement for bids will be posted in the Pennsylvania Engineering and Construction Management System (ECMS) to give contractors across the state the opportunity to bid on the project.

But Skulsky said he personally contacted local contractors to let them know about the project.

"We are hoping to get local contractors," Skulsky said. "It is a statewide posting, but we still think it is more desirable to get a local contractor. It would be that much better to work with them."

Skulsky said he's called about a dozen local contractors to gauge their interest.

"I contacted them to give

them a 'heads up' that the RFP was going out," Skulsky said. "It's important everybody knows about the project. We don't want them to come back later, and say they didn't know about it."

Meanwhile, Skulsky said the COG is preparing to advertise for a start-up grant for the building codes inspection program the COG wants to develop.

Under this program, local municipalities would be able to get inspection services for the state's new building codes – including electrical and plumbing.

"We have developed a budget," Skulsky said. "We will use the existing code officers from our participating municipalities. We have three or four.

"The crux of the grant will be to hire a consultant," Skulsky said.

Because of the COG's work with the new code inspection program, it has attracted a new member municipality.

Skulsky said Hollenback Township has decided to join the M-COG.

"Their prime purpose originally in joining the COG was the UCC (Uniform Construction Code)," Skulsky said.

"They talked about joining, and when they heard what else we were doing, they decided to join. They may or may not participate in the UCC program."