

U.S. aid flows for water plant and police

By John Zucal Managing Editor, Orange Transcript
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Two projects which city officials have been working to advance received boosts from Washington lawmakers several weeks ago.

An omnibus appropriations bill which went through Congress in early December included several funding requests for Orange projects. That money became a reality Dec. 16 when President Barack Obama signed the \$ 447 billion measure. Orange is expected to receive \$ 450,000 to help upgrade technology systems in its police department and \$ 300,000 to aid in the rebuilding of its water pumping station along Chestnut Street. For city officials, Orange's inclusion in the federal list came after nine months of working to secure support from federal lawmakers. The officials, led by Mayor Eldridge Hawkins Jr., met with Rep. Donald Payne and representatives of Sens. Frank Lautenberg and Robert Menendez to tour potential project sites throughout the city and discuss additional possible projects.

The funding requests were placed in the omnibus bill by Payne, who represents Orange in the 10th Congressional District.

According to Hawkins, rehabilitation of the water facility will allow the city to resume residential developments which had been halted by state officials due to the age and inadequacy of the pumping station. Improvements in police technology, he said, have been needed for more than a decade with immediate upgrades to improve basic functions.

"Both projects are key to the future of Orange," said Hawkins during his announcement. "Construction of the water treatment plant makes possible future development to hold down taxes. The police technology upgrade will make it possible for our already extremely effective police department to do its job even better." According to police officials, the department's computer infrastructure, as well as its records system, are at risk of "crashes," also known as shutdowns, and information losses because of low memory. Some of the funds would be used to purchase a computer-aided dispatch system, said police officials.

Hawkins said the only immediate alternative city officials faced for funding these projects was through local taxes. With his introduced 2010 budget containing an 8.6 percent municipal tax increase, not including \$ 500,000 in Extraordinary Aid awarded from the state, Hawkins said that had to be avoided.