

OLEAN TIMES HERALD

\$20 million solar farm proposed in West Valley

- By RICK MILLER, Olean Times Herald

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WEST VALLEY — A \$20 million solar facility is being proposed in the town of Ashford that would lead to lower electric bills for 1,500 area residents and small businesses.

West Valley Solar LLC, a division of BQ Energy of Wappingers Falls, is the same company that has already installed two solar farms in Olean and is working on a third.

The fourth solar farm being proposed in Cattaraugus County will conform to the Cattaraugus County Industrial Development Agency's standard solar energy payment in lieu of taxes (P.I.L.O.T.). The standard solar P.I.L.O.T. is \$5,000 per megawatt.

Corey Wiktor, IDA executive director, said at 10 megawatts, the West Valley Solar LLC project would generate \$50,000 a year for P.I.L.O.T. payments to the town of Ashford, West Valley Central School District and Cattaraugus County.

In addition, through an energy broker, up to 1,500 area residents and small business who are customers of National Grid will share in unspecified savings on their electric bills, Wiktor said.

According to James Falsetti, director of West Valley Solar LLC, the solar project will be a community distributed generation project with 100 percent of the power going to local consumption.

"This project is similar to our Solean, Solean West and Homeridae projects (in Olean)," Falsetti wrote in the P.I.L.O.T. application to the IDA.

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In addition to the Olean P.I.L.O.T.s., community benefits from those projects are included for St. Bonaventure University, Olean General Hospital and the City of Olean.

The company also is seeking a reduction in the IDA project fee from \$200,000 to \$100,000, Wiktor noted. The fees are set at 1 percent of the project, Wiktor said. West Valley Solar LLC had sought a 0.5 percent project fee

The solar farm, Wiktor said, is proposed for an unused site on the Western New York Nuclear Service Center off Buttermilk Road in the town of Ashford.

Since it is owned by the New York State Energy Research and Development Authority (NYSERDA), there are currently no property taxes levied on the property. West Valley Solar LLC "will offer a revenue stream" from untaxed land, Wiktor said.

NYSERDA had issued a request for proposals for solar projects on property it owns in the state, he said.

"BQ Energy has been working on this with the town of Ashford for several months," Wiktor said. "They are looking to build and operate this solar project next year. They need various approvals and an interconnect agreement with National Grid."

The Town of Ashford is the lead agency on the State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQRA).

The IDA has scheduled a public hearing on the project for Oct. 9 at 10 a.m. at the Ashford Community Center in West Valley.

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