

Concord board hears updates on Genesee Road Solar

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Editor

As the proposed Genesee Road Solar Energy Center in Concord and Sardinia continues to move forward, the Concord Town Board, at its Sept. 12 meeting, heard updates on the project. Ryan Storke from Storke, LLC made a presentation to the board about the Solar Energy Center and what could be coming to the town.

The Genesee Road Solar Energy Center would be a 350 megawatt project by EDF Renewables in partnership with Storke, LLC. The solar panel project would be located in the towns of Concord and Sardinia, with a final project size of approximately 2,500 acres. The project has been submitted into the 2019 New York State Energy Research and Development Agency Large Scale RFP, which is scheduled to be awarded in December.

Storke reported that the open house event on Aug. 7 at the East Concord Fire Hall was well attended by the community. Residents were able to see information on the proposed project and ask questions about what the project will entail for the town. Additional meetings will be scheduled, with the next one being in either October or November.

“We appreciate anyone who came out to [the open house],” Storke said. “About 50 people showed up and there were very thoughtful questions as we went around the boards.”

Studies have been completed for the integration of sheep from local farms into the Genesee Road Solar Energy Center for vegetation management and to limit mechanical mowing. The project is also planning on planting clover or other ground cover to stimulate foraging bees and butterflies and producing honey at the site with the bees.

The project is currently in the pre-application phase, Storke said. If everything in the application, hearings and decision phases goes correctly, construction is set to start in spring 2022 and completed by the end of 2023.

In other board news:

– The board approved a resolution honoring the Concord American Legion Post 431 for its 100th anniversary. Supervisor Clyde Drake will present the proclamation to the American Legion at an upcoming event.

– The board awarded a bid to Bill Bognar Excavating in the amount of \$23,900.90 for sewer repairs at Craneridge.

The Town Board will next meet Thursday, Oct. 10 at 7 p.m. in the Town Hall.

Town of Colden earns Clean Energy Community Designation

The Town of Colden has announced that it has been designated a Clean Energy Community by the New York State Energy Research and Development Authority, recognizing its leadership in reducing energy use, cutting costs and driving clean energy locally.

Announced by Governor Andrew M. Cuomo in August 2016, the \$16 million Clean Energy Communities initiative supports local government leaders across the state by providing grants to eligible municipalities to implement energy efficiency, renewable energy and sustainable development projects in their communities. Clean Energy Communities support Governor Cuomo's Green New Deal, a clean energy and jobs agenda that puts New York State on a path to a carbon-neutral economy as well as the State's Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act, the most aggressive climate change program in the nation, by demonstrating the importance of communities in helping New York reach its goal for greenhouse gas emissions to be reduced 85 by 2050 and a carbon-free electricity sector by 2040.

The Town of Colden received the designation for completing four of 10 high-impact clean energy actions identified by NYSERDA as part of the Clean Energy Communities initiative. To earn the Clean Energy Community designation, Colden completed the following high-impact clean energy actions:

- Streamlined the local approval processes for solar projects through adoption of the New York State Unified Solar Permit.
- Converted streetlights to energy efficient LED technology.
- Completed energy code enforcement training on best practices in energy code enforcement for code compliance officers and other municipal officers.
- Adopted a benchmarking policy to track and report the energy use of the Town's municipal buildings.

Supervisor James DePasquale commented that, "Colden's government has been supporting the NYSERDA's Clean Energy Community initiative since it was recommended by the Colden Planning Board many months ago. As a community in rural Erie County we feel it is important to be a leader in this area, due to our limited rural infrastructure, and our desire to save our citizens money through efficient use of energy within our town. In addition to all of the high impact actions which Colden has completed to date, we are presently part of a consortium of five rural towns. These towns are part of the Green Springville Solarize Southtowns initiative. Under the Solarize PV campaign, citizens in the participating towns can obtain discounted solar installations for their homes or businesses. Projects must be completed before the expiration of the NYS Net Metering provisions, the other changes to tax credits, and other factors which go into effect in January 2020. The Solarize PV program is also available

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for commercial as well as agricultural residents of Colden. Our Solarize Southtowns campaign is also the first one in New York State to include the newest 'Solar For-All' high impact action. That action allows income qualified families to save on their monthly utility bills through the use of bulk purchased solar energy generated at Solar Farm facilities in Western New York. These are all terrific incentives for the citizens, farmers and businesses of Colden."

Colden citizens or businesses who would like to discuss the features and availability of the ongoing Solarize Southtowns campaign should contact the Town Clerk's office (941-5012, christina.kerlin@townofcolden.com) or the Colden Planning Board Chairman (537-3278, walter.kammer@townofcolden.com). Information will be supplied upon request.

"Congratulations to the Town of Colden for taking this important step to - wards a cleaner and more renewable energy future," Alicia Barton, President and CEO, NYSERDA said. "Today's announcement is another reminder that New York communities are ready and willing to act against the negative effects of climate change and support Governor Cuomo's ambitious Green New Deal vision of building a near zero-carbon future for New York."

Cities, counties, towns and villages that complete at least four of 10 high-impact clean energy actions are designated Clean Energy Communities and are eligible to apply for funding of up to \$250,000 with no local cost share and the option of receiving up to 25 percent paid in advance to support additional clean energy projects. At least two of the four actions must have been completed after Aug. 1, 2016. NYSERDA is accepting applications for funding on a rolling basis through Sept. 30, 2019 or until funds are exhausted, whichever comes first. Funds are being provided through the Clean Energy Fund and the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative.

Additional clean energy action items communities can take to achieve designation include:

- Implementing Community Choice Aggregation so residents can gain greater choice and control over energy use as a group.
- Installing an electric vehicle charging station.
- Performing energy efficiency and renewable energy upgrades including installing new LED lighting and heat pumps in municipal buildings to achieve a 10 percent reduction in greenhouse gas emissions.
- Participating in a community-based Solarize campaign to reduce solar project costs through joint purchasing, this is an ongoing initiative in Colden.
- Earning Climate Smart Communities Certification through the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation for developing a comprehensive program to reduce its carbon footprint and improve the environment.

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– Establishing an Energize NY Finance Program that enables long-term, affordable Property Assessed Clean Energy financing for energy efficiency and renewable energy projects at commercial buildings and not-for-profits.

NYSERDA's local Clean Energy Coordinator Jason Kulaszewski, from the University at Buffalo's Regional Institute, was able to provide technical assistance at no cost to the community to develop and prioritize clean energy goals, provided resources and helped with available funding associated with the various actions.

For more information on Clean Energy Communities, visit www.nyseda.ny.gov/cec. Local government officials or employees in West - ern New York can contact our local Clean Energy Coordinator at jasonkul@buffalo.edu for assistance navigating the program.