

**ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & ENERGY COMMITTEE MEETING
HELD IN ROOM #318
PUTNAM COUNTY OFFICE BUILDING
CARMEL, NEW YORK 10512**

Members: Chairman Gouldman, Legislators Jonke & Montgomery

**Tuesday July 12, 2022
(Immediately following the Personnel Committee Meeting beginning at 6:00PM)**

The meeting was called to order at 6:55P.M. by Chairman Gouldman who led in the Pledge of Allegiance. Upon roll call Committee Members Jonke, Montgomery and Chairman Gouldman were present.

Item #3 - Approval of Minutes – March 23, 2022 and April 13, 2022 Meetings

The minutes were approved as submitted.

Item #4 - Discussion/Solarize Putnam Program/Sustainable Putnam President Joseph Montuori

Legislator Jonke made a motion to accept the additional; Seconded by Legislator Montgomery. All in favor.

Sustainable Putnam President Joseph Montuori gave the attached PowerPoint Presentation. He stated Sustainable Putnam is a New York State Non-Profit Organization. He stated the organization works with a multitude of partners including Cornell Cooperative Extension, the Towns of Kent, Putnam Valley, and Philipstown. He stated recently the organization partnered with Putnam Valley Tompkins Corners cultural center to create a native plant meadow. He stated the organization runs a 100% Renewable Energy Campaign. He stated the organization aids small businesses and householders in the transition to renewable energy. He stated the organization has partnered with Putnam CAP to help lower to moderate income people weatherize their apartments and homes by providing materials and free coaching. He stated the Community Solar Program is an opportunity for residents, small businesses, and municipal facilities to save 10% on their electric bill for 20 years with no charges or fees. He stated the County can earn \$100 per enrollment from Solar Contractors as well as 200 points towards the Climate Smart Certification, which requires 25 people or more to enroll. He stated this program is a collaboration between Sustainable Putnam and Power Market. He stated Power Market is a solar farm aggregator that facilitates communication between Solar Contractors, Utility, and Sustainable Putnam. He stated there are also partnerships with NYSERDA (New York State Energy Research and Development Authority) and the Hudson Valley Regional Council. He stated after the Solar Farm is built, electricity goes into grid and customers who subscribed to the program save on their electric bill. He stated all Solar Farms in this program are in New York State and people receive solar energy from the territory of their utility provider. He stated the County can take advantage of Community Solar by enrolling its facilities in the Community Solar Program. He stated the County could partner with Sustainable Putnam by passing a

resolution, putting a link on the County website, or issuing a press release to convey to residents that this is a legitimate program. He stated the County could contract with Solar Contractors to build Solar Farms in Putnam County. He stated the importance of having decentralized renewables as local as possible so there is still a local power source in case of grid failure.

Chairman Gouldman questioned if Solar Farms have to be within the electric company that a person uses.

President Montuori stated Solar Farms must be within the electric company that the person uses, and people provide information on their utility provider when they sign up.

Chairman Gouldman questioned why Solar Farms have to be within the electric company that a person uses.

President Montuori stated this is a rule that NYSERDA set up when creating this program to encourage solar industry in New York State and meet the state's climate goals.

Chairman Gouldman questioned what the closest solar farm is in relation to where we are.

Legislator Montgomery stated all the Solar Farms are in Upstate New York and not necessarily in NYSEG regional borders.

President Montuori stated many private solar farms being built and selling electricity directly to Utility Companies.

Chairman Gouldman questioned if we know the percentage of households in Putnam County that use solar energy.

President Montuori stated he does not know this information, but the Utility Companies might have these figures.

Chairman Gouldman questioned what the options are for someone who wants to use solar energy.

President Montuori stated people can have a lease system, but this is not the best financial option. He stated buying outright is better, but expensive in the short-term as the typical system can be \$20,000-\$25,000 and half of that is paid upfront. He stated people receive federal tax credit, state rebates, and state income tax deduction from this method. He stated the organization tried to partner with contractors to create a Solar Installation Program, but this needed to be dropped as contractors are unavailable and there is a shortage of solar panels. He stated Community Solar is the next best thing as many homes are not suitable for solar installation and the process is difficult.

Chairman Gouldman questioned what kind of maintenance solar installation requires.

President Montuori stated solar installation requires no maintenance if it is done with Community Solar. He stated a phone app provides information on how much power solar energy is generating.

Chairman Gouldman questioned if electric vehicles can be charged through solar power.

President Montuori stated it is possible during the day, but it is cheaper to charge at night. He stated any power during the day that is not used goes back into the grid and the Utility Company pays for that power at same rate they are being paid by the customer.

Chairman Gouldman questioned if the power from charging goes to the Utility Company or a generator.

President Montuori stated solar power is tied to the grid and cannot be used during a power outage because people could get hurt if electricity is being generated while power lines are being repaired. He stated the system is shut down and power cannot be used unless there is a battery backup.

Legislator Jonke questioned if there is a catch with Community Solar.

President Montuori stated there is no catch and NYSERDA required Utility Companies to buy power from Solar Farms if a utility customer is willing to purchase it, inducing customers to buy at a discounted rate and save money.

Legislator Jonke questioned who is picking up the 10% for the discount bill.

President Montuori stated the Solar Contractors are because they are making money and giving some of their profit towards the electric bills.

Legislator Montgomery questioned if the project of building more Solar Farms in Upstate New York has started and if some of Central Hudson's solar power is coming from that region?

President Montuori is unsure of this information.

Legislator Montgomery thanked President Montuori for his dedication to Sustainable Putnam and believes this is a great program for the County to do. She questioned what the minimum space requirement is to construct a Solar Farm.

President Montuori stated several County buildings have solar panels and solar panels can be added to other buildings.

Legislator Montgomery questioned if a building can be a solar farm.

President Montuori affirmed a building can be a solar farm and these buildings can sell shares to town residents. He stated all eight (8) libraries have signed up for Community Solar and the organization is working to promote the program to houses of worship.

Legislator Albano questioned if those who already have solar are still eligible for this program.

President Montuori stated NYSEERDA does not allow this for the sake of the Utility Companies staying in business.

Legislator Albano stated Tilly Foster Farm has a big electric transormance station and space to create a Solar Farm, but the WAC (Watershed Agricultural Council) agreement does not recognize solar as farming. He stated he had a discussion with Senator Harckham about this matter and will continue to pursue this.

Legislator Castellano questioned how Solar Farms are built.

President Montuori stated some Community Solar Programs receive two bills from Solar Farms and Utility Companies, which is more complicated. He stated Power Market consolidates everything into one bill from NYSEG. He stated the sign-up for customers is easy, but it takes NYSEG or Central Hudson two (2) months before connecting accounts.

Legislator Sayegh thanked President Montuori for everything he is doing with Sustainable Putnam, and it is good for people to re-evaluate their electricity. She questioned if people could contact him directly if they have questions.

President Montuori stated the public can reach him through email or website and he also does home visits.

Legislator Albano stated the biggest benefit is idea that solar energy is green friendly, and the discount is an added bonus.

Legislator Montgomery questioned if renters could use this program.

President Montuori affirmed that renters could use this program.

Town of Patterson Resident Stacy Dumont commended Legislator Sayegh and the Committee for inviting Sustainable Putnam to the meeting because the work they do is important and provides the citizens means to act for the health of the earth.

Item #5 - FYI/Unemployment Report – Duly Noted

Item #6 - Other Business – None

Item #7 – Adjournment

There being no further business, at 7:22P.M., Chairman Gouldman made a motion to adjourn; seconded by Legislator Jonke. All in favor.

Respectfully submitted by Legislative Intern, Eden Barone.