

Minutes - Putnam Valley Climate Smart Committee

March 1, 2021. 7 pm

Attendees:

Ralph Smith - Putnam Valley Town Board Councilman, Task Force Coordinator
Ina Cholst - Climate Smart Committee
Wanda Diaz - Climate Smart Committee
Joseph Ferraro - Climate Smart Committee
Ben Lowder - Climate Smart Committee
Marilyn Power - Climate Smart Committee
Lisa Spittal - Climate Smart Committee
Michael Usai - Climate Smart Committee
Terry Raskin - PV Library
Wendy Whetsel -- PV Town Board Councilperson, CCE Liaison
Eileen Reilly -CCE chair

The meeting started with good news: Ralph reported that, after three months of work, the Town of Putnam Valley has passed an enabling law for Community Choice Aggregation. We are now able to evaluate and decide, as a community, whether we choose to buy 100% renewable energy at a cheaper price than is generally available.

Ralph then introduced Jeff Domanski, our liaison to Joule (our administrator for the program), to present details about the CCA program and to help us to launch the community education and exploration phase. Members of the Climate Smart Committee and representatives from the CCE and the library were present.

Jeff went over the definition of Community Choice Aggregation, emphasizing that each NYSEG electric bill contains two parts - one charge for delivery and one charge for supply. The first part, the delivery part, would not change. Jeff emphasized that NYSEG would continue to *deliver* our electricity, no matter what we decide about CCA. He made the analogy to FedEx or UPS, who delivers the package that you receive --but does not manufacture it. The second part of the bill is the supply, the energy service company who makes, or sells, the energy. It is the supply part that we would be exploring at this time. Jeff also emphasized that, whatever we decide, NYSEG would continue to handle the billing for both parts. Homeowners would *not* receive two bills.

Interestingly, Jeff also told us about an additional possibility called Community Distributed Generation (CDG, also referred to as Community Solar). that became available just a few weeks ago (January 2021). CDG is a program in which subscribers commit to enrolling in a local NYS green energy manufacturer (solar, wind, or water) and in return receive a 10% discount on their total electric bills (delivery and supply). To oversimplify, if a homeowner has a monthly electric bill now of \$100, they would be billed \$90/month under the CDG program. (There might or might not be additional savings from CCA). A town can choose CCA alone or both CCA and CDG. Both are opt-out programs and both allow individuals to choose not to join or to leave the programs at any time. Either program would consist of 100% green energy, helping to decrease the homeowner and the Town's carbon footprint and, hopefully, to mitigate climate change.

Questions were asked at this point. Wanda asked how long a CCA is in effect once it is passed. Jeff answered that historically it is usually a two-year contract, after which the Town can choose to renew the contract or not. He also added that the CDG (aka Community Solar) would be a 20-year commitment by the provider to a 10% reduction in cost. While the Town

and the provider are committed to these timelines, Individual homeowners could opt out of either one or both, at any time. Terry asked how many communities we would be aggregated with. Jeff told us that there will be 10 communities, and possibly 6 more, mostly from Dutchess and Orange, joining by July 1, 2021. If that time frame was reasonable to Putnam Valley, then we would have the advantage of joining with that large group. If we needed more time, there would be other communities coming on board. Terry then asked about homeowners who already have solar panels installed. Jeff's answer was that those homeowners would not be eligible for community solar (CDG), but they could still be part of the CCA, community choice aggregation, program.

Jeff then talked about the next steps and the timeline for evaluation and education. If we wished to meet the July 1 deadline, we would count back from there. We would have at least a 60-day period of public educational and Q and A sessions. There would be at least two, and maybe more, Town-wide sessions. There would also be a larger number of smaller meetings oriented to specific, already existing groups, such as the Town Districts, PTA groups, Veteran's groups, senior groups, etc. There would be web site and social media information readily available in several places. Towards the end of the timeline, there would be a FAQ package sent to all Putnam Valley homeowners with specific information about rates and opt-out methods. Finally, there would be a notification letter which would start the 30-day initial opt-out period followed by an indefinite option to opt-out at any time. Support for questions and other concerns would also go on indefinitely.

Several more questions were addressed at this point. Ina asked for clarification of CDG (Community Solar) and Jeff's replies included that the CDG would be completely opt-out and that there is expected to be sufficient supply of clean energy in the NYSEG territory for the 10% decrease in rates to be met for Putnam Valley. Terry and Eileen asked questions about consumer protection, specifically, what would happen if a large percentage, say 50% of the community opted out. The answer was that the contracts were very consumer protective. Even if 99% of a town opted out, even if there was only one homeowner in a town left in the program, the provider would be committed to providing that homeowner with the agreed upon rate for their electricity.

Ralph then brought the meeting to a close, thanking Jeff and the attendees, and emphasizing that the conversation was ongoing.