

Minutes

Planning & Economic Development Committee

**March 17, 2021, 6:00 pm**

**Virtual Meeting via Zoom**

Gerace Office Building, Mayville, NY

Members Present: Odell, Starks, Muldowney, Harmon, Ward, Rankin, Lawton

Others: Tampio, Ames, Aldrich, Wurster, Geise, Bourke, C. Bell, McCoy, Chagnon

Chairman Odell called the meeting to order at 6:01 p.m.

Approval of Minutes (2/17/21)

MOVED by Legislator Muldowney, SECONDED by Legislator Starks.

*Unanimously Carried*

Privilege of the Floor

Chairman Odell: Madam Clerk, do we have any correspondence for privilege of the floor tonight?

Clerk Tampio: Yes, we do. I have two communications to read for you.

Of course, addressed to Chautauqua County Economic and Planning and Development Committee. There are a number of solar projects being proposed for Chautauqua County. A thorough cost benefit analysis of these projects would show the negative impacts outweigh the perceived benefits. Forbes Magazine (December 27, 2020), states industrial solar at this latitude (42 degrees) **falls below the “economically viable**

**threshold”**. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/robertbryce/2021/12/27/why-is-solar-energy-getting-250-times-more-in-federal-tax-credits-than-nuclear/?sh=7dd902c121cf>

The energy industry standard of energy efficiency is called “*Energy Returned on Energy Invested*” (ERoEI).

Consider the energy expended to manufacture, transport, install and decommission utility scale solar compared to the amount of electricity New York solar can produce. More energy is needed to create a solar project in this area than can be realized over its lifetime.

The Forbes article titled “*Why Is Solar Energy Getting 250 Times More Federal Tax Credits Than Nuclear?*” written by energy analyst Robert Bryce points out, “the solar and wind sectors have claimed that they no longer need subsidies because they are cost-competitive with hydrocarbons. And yet the ITC and PTC subsidies continue to be extended and increased. Those extensions are diverting billions of dollars from the federal treasury and into the coffers of

foreign and domestic companies who are wrapping themselves in the cloak of climate change ...” He further notes this does not include state and local incentives for solar.

The recent events in Texas and California indicate the security of the electrical system is at risk when unreliable wind and solar are included. Western NY has a system that is 80% emission free.

At a 2020 town meeting, a South Ripley Solar ConnectGen representative stated the sale of solar produced electricity is “*peanuts*” compared to the sale of the “*green credits*.”

According to Ozzie Zehner, UCLA energy engineer (“*Planet of the Humans*”). Industrial solar “*Relies on the most toxic industrial processes ever created. Producing symbolic power has seduced well-meaning environmentalists into making bad decisions with long term negative impacts.*”

As a “Home Rule” state we still have the right to prevent the state from imposing harmful projects on the rural communities we cherish.

Sincerely, Karen Engstrom, Mayville, N.Y.

This comes to us from Robert and Katherine Galbraith, Westfield, N.Y.

### **The Politics Are Way Ahead of the Science, or New York State Energy Policy, Texas Style**

The irony is inescapable.

ConnectGen, a Texas LLC, is proposing to develop 1,500-2,000 acres of Agricultural and Forested land for the South Ripley Solar Project. Last month, Texas was hit with massive power outages precipitated by an unrealistic energy policy that was too dependent on intermittent power generation from wind and solar.

New York State is recklessly heading down the same “Green Energy” path as Texas, where a faulty renewable energy policy added up to power outages and rolling blackouts. Texas suffered severe, sometimes tragic, results.

Considering this, it is appropriate for our elected officials to reconsider New York’s energy plans. Given the recent revelations of Governor Cuomo’s actions, it brings into question his policies on renewable energy.

Let’s look at the facts:

- Our state, our businesses, our homes, our country, cannot rely on intermittent power. We need a steady, sustained source of power - which we currently have with our hydroelectric (70%) and nuclear (no CO2 emissions) power sources.
- New York State, and Chautauqua County in particular, have the worst solar insolation in the country.
- The only reason the state is being overrun by solar developers is the Federal and New York state overly generous tax credits, subsidies, and advanced depreciation, “Green Energy” credits, enhanced electricity rates, and local tax abatements. These actions have nothing to do with good environmental stewardship.
- The South Ripley Solar Project capacity is 270 megawatts, but given the efficiency of the panels of 14%, real output will be in the area of 34 megawatts, while sacrificing 1,500-2,000 acres of agricultural and forested land.

- Solar panels are typically manufactured in China, and are composed of rare earth elements and other materials known to be toxic. They are also known to be coated with an anti-glare compound called perfluoroalkyl (PFAS) substances which is toxic and connect be broken down.
- Currently there is no way to recycle solar panels. Once they reach their life expectancy, they will be tossed into a landfill.
- Decommissioning plans and funding remain a major concern, the possibility being the taxpayers are left holding the bag to decommission these projects.
- The newly formed State Office of Renewable Energy Siting, or ORES, has just issued regulations called Section 94-C, which overhauls the state's large scale renewable siting processes. This fast tracks **all** NY State's renewable energy projects. 94-C moves these projects to a centralized, closed, decision making process, bypassing local government input.
- Our rights as citizens have been severely curtailed by this new policy.
- Our counties and our towns are the last line of defense against the onslaught of these solar developers. We still have options to control the outcome and protect ourselves and the environment by passing sensible, fair, and comprehensive zoning laws. Ripley currently has their draft law out for comment, which will hopefully be adopted soon.
- We request that the Chautauqua County Industrial Development Agency (CCIDA), carefully consider their positions on Payment In Lieu of Taxes (PILOT) on proposed solar and wind projects. Consider, not only the financial ramifications, but also the impact these projects will have on the health and safety of our communities and our environment. Without any checks and balances provided on the county and local levels, the solar industry will proliferate throughout Chautauqua County and our neighboring counties, turning our green farmland and forests into wastelands.
- We urge the County Legislature to pass a No-PILOT resolution and send it to the Chautauqua County IDA. We cannot sit by and watch our beautiful farmland, animal habitats, and verdant forests destroyed in the name of "Green Energy."

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Proposed Resolution – Authorize Public Hearing Regarding a Potential Application for 2021  
Community Development Block Grant

Mr. Geise: Nate, do you want to take this?

Mr. Aldrich: Yes, absolutely. Mr. Chairman, as you know in 2020, the majority of New York State grant resources through the CFA were cancelled, however, there were a few programs that rolled out late last year through (*inaudible*) and the money that was still available is the MicroEnterprise Grant program through OCF. We're joined tonight by Chuck Bell from Harrison Studio, our consultant and one of the leading consulting firms on procuring OCF funding in the State. We're contemplating an application up to \$300,000 which would establish this grant program, another tool for our small businesses. If we're awarded we work with Chautauqua Opportunities for Development Incorporated and they would provide grants in

amounts between five thousand and thirty five thousand based on job creation targets. The first step involved in this is a public hearing which we're proposing for the April Legislature meeting. Subsequent to that, we would come back to this committee with an authorizing resolution likely in May for consideration at the May Legislature meeting for submission of the grant. With that, Chuck, did I leave any major details out or do you want to elaborate on anything? That in a nutshell. This resolution is pretty straightforward. Any questions?

Chairman Odell: Thank you very much for that Nate. Anything to add from the team? I'll refer to the Committee, anything? It's pretty straightforward on this one. It just gives us the authorization to hold the public hearing as Nate said at the April legislative cycle with the proper notices (*inaudible*). This is the first step (*inaudible*) potentially have some wheels here and like you said, part of their opportunities last year through the (*inaudible*) funding application process was curtailed so this is the avenue to pursue so thanks guys for pursuing this. If there is no questions, all those in favor?

*Unanimously Carried*

Discussion - Planning and Economic Development 2020 Review and 2021 Goals – M. Geise

Other

MOVED by Legislator Ward, SECONDED by Legislator Rankin to adjourn.

*Unanimously Carried (7:17 p.m.)*

Respectfully submitted and transcribed,  
Kathy Tampio, Clerk/Olivia Ames, Deputy Clerk/Lori J. Foster, Sr. Stenographer