

Ulster County EMC

Meeting Minutes

November 29, 2017

Members in Attendance:

Dave Haldeman (Chair), Shawangunk

Kristen Schara (Secretary), Hurley

Emilie Hauser, Kingston

Eric Stewart, Marbletown

Jim Littlefoot, New Paltz

Jim Mays, Olive

Amanda LaValle, Mandy Wolfson and Nick Hvosda,

UC Dept. of the Environment

John Sansalone, Gardiner

Judith Karpova, Rochester

Margot Becker, At Large

Mark Ellison, Esopus

Virginia Starke, At Large

William More, At Large

Guests: John Wackman, Program Manager, Solarize Hudson Valley, Ed Haffmans

The meeting was called to order at 6:50 pm.

Speaker – Solarize Hudson Valley

John Wackman is on the Kingston Climate Smart Commission and the program manager for Solarize Hudson Valley. Solarize is funded by NYSERDA and they have been working on community education and campaigns for rooftop solar installations. The program offers a group purchase discount and vets the companies that participate. From the summer 2015 through 2017, 156 homeowners installed 1.3 MW in UC. The program funding ends Jan 31, 2018. Fewer than half the homes in the northeast get enough sun to install solar. Community shared solar is the next program. It was enacted by the PSC in 2015, but it is now available to all rate payers. Solar farms to provide this electricity are planned in Waywayanda and in Dutchess County. It will be open to rate payers who cannot install their own systems such as renters. They achieved 3.4 MW so far. One solar installation is 2 MW. In UC, there are 20 solar farms in the permitting process. A solar law should be drafted to meet local requirements. NYSERDA aids in the process, including siting, SEQR, PILOT provisions and decommissioning. The top 4 counties in NYS with planned solar farms are Orange (35), Thompsons (27), Sullivan (21) Ulster (20). Dutchess has 9 planned. Within 2 years, there could be 15 solar farms delivering power. The goal is 50% alternative energy by 2030 in NYS. (Q- How do the projections get effected by changes in pricing due to tariffs? A- It is causing market uncertainty, it will probably raise prices of systems. Companies are anticipating. Q- Solarize is ending, is this your last project? A- They are waiting for NYSERDA response. NYSERDA is shifting to home heating efficiencies such as heat pumps. Q-New installs are off 25-35% due to the value based pricing? A- The utilities have been negotiating to change the formula to determine the value of electricity generated by solar panels.) Net metering will be revised to VDER process using a complex formula. There has been a slowdown due to this but solar is here to stay. However, it makes the return on investment calculations complicated. (Judith – Should make homes energy efficient as the first step. Free home energy audit can be done to show ways to invest to get efficiencies. It takes 3 hours). NYSERDA selected NEXAMP as the company to build farms through this program. Orange and Rockland and one for Central Hudson. The rate payer will see a 10% discount over the course of the year. Once the solar farm in Wappinger Falls is completed, customers who sign up will receive 2 bills, one from Central Hudson and one from NEXAMP. They will allocate a portion to you based on your bill. (Q - How big is the farm? A-20 acres including buffer zone. Q- How does it fit in with Wappingers land use planning? A - Location is the issue – effect on neighbors, visual appearance, wetlands, historic use are things considered. The site must be close to a 3 phase circuit or substation. Q- Is there anything in the future that will reduce the need for space? A-The technology breakthrough will be in batteries for energy storage). UC is building 1.9 MW farm on the Town of Ulster landfill (8 acres). (Q-what about wind power? A- there is not enough sustained wind in this part of the state.) If you have an ESCO, this will work for you. CAC's are asked to publicize this program.

Old Business

None.

New Business

EMC members are asked to send questions for next month's speaker to Dave.

Margot sent Dave a sign-on letter to put money in the UC budget to address the issue of pharmaceutical disposal. EMC members are asked to support the issue and publicize it in their towns. John motioned that the EMC will continue to pursue this issue and Margot and William to coordinate with the UC executive's office. John motioned. Jim Mays seconded. Motion passed unanimously. Jim asked to be kept in the loop. John will bring the issue to NYWEA.

The issue of DEC yearly updates for environmental organizations was discussed during the board meetings of the NYSACC and NYSAEMC. According to a complaint printed in the NYSAEMC newsletter, information regarding NYSDEC yearly updates has not been forthcoming. The meeting is an opportunity for EMC's/CAC's and the DEC to communicate and share information. The updates typically occur the second week of June. The DEC needs to provide funding and publicize the update meeting. Linda Vera is the local contact. John nominated Judith to be the liaison to the state EMC. William seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously. It was suggested that the EMC invite the DEC participation specialist for our region to a meeting.

Emilie suggested that the EMC submit events to local calendars to publicize EMC activities. It is on the Daily Freeman and the UC legislative calendars. It could be put on the Almanac for example.

The Gardiner town supervisor is interested in a workshop on SEQR for training credits. Gardiner could host it in March. Dave and John will plan. Someone from the DEC or attorney general's office could lead it.

There is a generating plant planned for the Town of Ulster (Lincoln Park Group). It is designed to operate during peak power demand using natural gas and batteries. It will be located in an undeveloped area between Shoprite and RT 32. Emily had the long form of the SEQR. Town of Ulster is having a public meeting on Dec 7 at 6:30. A previous project (Ulster Manor) uncovered historical and cultural Native American sites in that area. Judith and Margot will attend and update EMC members with any information.

Dept. of Environment Update/Legislative Update

A conference at Mohonk on habitat connectivity is planned. There will be an update on the core habitat areas study and how it has been used by various towns. They got an updated core habitat area. It will be shared online and on the UC parcel viewer. It is useful for open space, natural resource, and heritage planning. The study helps to give towns a bigger perspective.

The county was awarded a DEC Environmental Excellence Award for sustainability. Environmental Excellence Award. It was interesting to hear on other projects being done elsewhere.

The landfill solar project is progressing. The racks are in place. They are ballasted using concrete tubs. It is visible from the road. The UC Hazard Mitigation Plan is on the website. Amanda will send a link.

Nick Hvozda is a new employee at the Dept. of the Environment working on the NYSEDA clean energy plan project for the Law Enforcement Center and billing accounting data.

Additional EV charging stations are being installed at Golden Hill and SUNY Ulster. Marbletown is installing another EV charging station funded by their Solarize contractor.

Roundabout

None.

John motioned to adjourn. William seconded. Meeting adjourned unanimously at 8:20.

Next Meeting: January 31, Speaker– Brian Montgomery, National Weather Service Meteorologist