



John Ravitz is executive vice president and COO of the Business Council of Westchester.

Contributing Writer

Reaching green technology and energy goals

BY JOHN RAVITZ

For the past five years, the Business Council of Westchester (BCW) has been focused on the changing energy landscape in Westchester County and New York state because we must have a reliable, sustainable and cost-effective power grid if we want to successfully recruit and retain businesses.

The BCW has repeatedly urged state leaders to have honest conversations on how we are able to achieve the goals of the Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act (CLCPA), which mandates a 70% reduction in carbon emissions by 2030. State leaders, including the governor and the state comptroller, have finally acknowledged that New York has no chance of meeting the CLCPA's ambitious goals.

A July report by the Department of Public Service has Gov. Kathy Hochul's administration considering shifting the state's renewable energy goalpost to 2033. The predicted three-year shift is due to higher electricity demand from large manufacturing projects, continuing inflation and rising costs.

The BCW has been at the forefront of issues concerning the regional energy supply for the last 20 years. In fact, the BCW and our member Richard Ellenbogen, president of Allied Converters in New Rochelle, have been leading voices in warning that the state's efforts to quickly achieve unattainable alternative power goals would, in fact, precipitate power shortages.

Ellenbogen knows the subject as well as anyone, having embraced the spirit of the CLCPA beginning 25 years ago by producing 80% of his food-packaging manufacturing company's electricity on-site with a solar array and other technologies.

Unfortunately, the state's assurances that there was more than enough power to make up for the loss of the Indian Point nuclear plant which provided

25% of Westchester's and New York City's power proved to have been overly optimistic.

The BCW will continue to ask state leaders the tough questions that must be answered regarding the implementation and mandates that are in the CLCPA. Now, as we sweat through the dog days of summer and have been warned that our power supply is being

stretched to the outer limits of meeting demand, do we throw up our hands in despair and wait for the inevitable? We emphatically say no.

The BCW is continuing to be proactive in helping to build Westchester's new renewable energy infrastructure. That is why we have formed the Westchester Clean Energy Action Coalition, a group of 40+ BCW members who are leaders in both the renewable and alternative sources of energy and are on the front lines of helping to bring this new infrastructure to fruition in Westchester County.

The group includes prominent Westchester business leaders like Dan Singer, president and CEO of Robison, Ron Kamen of EarthKind Energy and Michael Murphy of Murphy Brothers Contracting. This coalition will advocate for sensible and realistic goals, as well as educate communities on the new clean energy technologies that we must implement throughout the county.

The Westchester Clean Energy Action Coalition seeks new and alternative approaches to meeting our future energy needs. We believe that it is right and responsible to work toward a green energy future. At the same time, everyone must understand that fossil fuels will continue to play a role as we transition into assuring that we have an adequate energy supply.

New York cannot afford to deny permits for new plants powered by natural gas, as it did in 2021 with the NRG Energy's Astoria Gas Turbine Power LLC and the Danskammer Energy

Center. Such actions risk putting New York in the same position as California, a state that has some of the highest power bills in the U.S.

The coalition sees an opportunity to pursue emerging concepts in the renewable energy arena. The range of technologies and approaches in Westchester is impressive, as are the opportunities they offer in developing concepts that address the multifaceted energy-supply picture.

Advances in solar, wind, geothermal, battery storage, as well as other alternative sources of clean energy, make novel approaches more cost effective and practical. Coupled with strides in efficiency and conservation, existing power supplies can serve more users.

The coalition seeks to collaborate with local communities to help them understand and accept that they play a crucial role in implementing new energy sources and technologies. Even as the evidence mounts that our weather is growing more extreme, communities in New York are resisting solar arrays, wind farms and solar-power battery facilities.

In February, a USA Today investigation revealed that 15% of counties nationwide now have some impediment to new, utility-scale wind and solar energy facilities. Last month, officials in multiple Westchester communities discussed moratoriums on battery storage systems or legislation to limit them.

These storage systems are essential to New York's green-energy transition. It is reasonable to have robust discussions about the placement of proven technologies like solar battery storage units, but blind opposition is unacceptable.

The Westchester Clean Energy Action Coalition is committed to doing its part to provide a voice for businesses and organizations that are working to develop, promote and install viable, affordable and new clean energy alternatives.



No matter what business you're in, we're into your business.

MAIN OFFICE TELEPHONE
914-694-3600
OFFICE FAX
914-694-3699

EDITORIAL EMAIL
pkatz@westfairinc.com
(Westchester news)

WRITE TO
4 Smith Ave., Suite 2
Mount Kisco, NY 10549

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