

Westchester joins energy alliance

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Westchester County has joined Sustainable Westchester, a consortium of more than 40 local governments focused on renewable energy and sustainability initiatives.

County Executive Robert P. Astorino announced in a press conference on May 23 that joining the nonprofit gives the county new partners to “continue to conserve and strengthen our natural resources and environment for current and future generations.”

For Sustainable Westchester, the county’s participation adds a level of government to a group that includes cities such as Yonkers, New Rochelle and White Plains, and a majority of the towns and villages in the county.

Bob Elliott, executive director of Sustainable Westchester, said the county has been supportive of the consortium in the past. Sustainable Westchester had been in discussions to work with the county on various initiatives before Westchester decided to join the consortium, according to Elliott.

In a press release, Elliott said the county’s involvement would allow Sustainable Westchester “to tap into the rich experience and expertise” of many county departments.

Elliott told the Business Journal that the group’s Municipal Solar Buyers Group, which helps municipalities install solar, could be of particular interest to the county.

The consortium facilitates other green initiatives such as Solarize Westchester and the Westchester Power community choice aggregation.

Solar installations have jumped from about 100 in 2010 to more than 1,200 last year, according to Astorino. Programs such as Solarize Westchester have helped in that effort by offering residents and small businesses in participating municipalities discounted solar panels and installation.

About 400 homeowners and commercial property owners installed solar panels through the program during campaigns in 16 different municipalities last year. Solarize launched its second round in the county earlier this year for residents and small businesses in Peekskill, Greenburgh, Pound Ridge and Lewisboro.

Including the county as a municipality, Sustainable Westchester now has 42 municipalities total in its consortium. The group was formed in 2014, when the Northern Westchester Energy Action Consortium and the Southern Westchester Energy Action Consortium joined forces to create a county-wide nonprofit.