

# Town will join energy buying program

By VICTORIA SHERIDAN

After a brief public hearing with representatives from Sustainable Westchester, the Pound Ridge Town Board voted unanimously May 3 to join the Community Choice Aggregation program.

The town has considered proposals to join CCA twice before, but board members declined to move forward because they felt that the program was too new and had not yet established a successful track record.

CCA is a program from Westchester Power — a branch of Sustainable Westchester — that authorizes the organization to purchase energy in bulk on behalf of the residents in its participating municipalities.

Because Westchester Power sets its prices at a fixed rate, it has the potential to save customers money on their energy bills when there is a spike in the New York State Electric and Gas fluctuating rate. However, Westchester Power does not guarantee lower prices.

Under CCA, NYSEG would remain the utility for delivering energy to Pound Ridge, but the energy would come from Westchester Power's supplier, Constellation Energy. One of CCA's goals is to mitigate carbon emissions, offering municipalities a "basic" power option — energy supplied by a mix of natural gas, nuclear power and hydro-power — or a more expensive "green" option consisting of 100 percent Renewable Energy Certificates with power partly derived from wind, solar and hydro sources.

"We urge the town after much deliberation to join this program because it makes so much sense," Scott Fernqvist, chair of the Energy Action Committee, told the board last week. "It brings together the purchasing power of 21 municipalities to really bring down the cost of energy for everyone."

Mr. Fernqvist and the EAC have favored joining the CCA since it was first introduced in 2015.

He reiterated that any resident or small business owner that currently

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COMMUNITY CHOICE AGGREGATION

gets power from NYSEG would be automatically enrolled in CCA, but that they can also opt out with no fee or penalty.

Representatives from Sustainable Westchester added that customers of Energy Service Companies would not be automatically enrolled, but that — with their ESCO contract permitting — they can call Sustainable Westchester if they want to participate in CCA. ESCO customers can also contact Sustainable Westchester to help calculate possible energy costs savings from switching to CCA, the representatives said.

After the public hearing was closed, Councilman Dan Paschkes moved that the board vote on enrolling in the CCA's green option, which cost one-tenth of a cent more per kilowatt than the basic option.

"To me it's a no-brainer," Mr. Paschkes said. "I think it's essentially the same cost and it doesn't pollute."

Mr. Paschkes emphasized that there should be outreach efforts to inform the residents about the process of enrolling in CCA. Prior to the vote, Mr. Fernqvist explained that the EAC would send information to Pound Ridge residents to educate them about CCA.

## Farmers market permit request

Also at the May 3 meeting, the town board debated an application from Max Marinucci, owner of the Wine Connection, to obtain a special use permit to host a farmers market in his store's parking lot, featuring vendor John Ubaldo, owner of the Outpost in Bedford.

At a Pound Ridge Business Association Meeting the previous night, two business owners — Billy Fortin and

Donna Simons — announced that they would be organizing a farmers market in the courtyard of Mr. Fortin's store, The Market at Pound Ridge Square. Before Mr. Fortin and Ms. Simons took on the project, they were concerned that a farmers market proposed by the town would create competition for local business owners from outside vendors.

Councilwoman Jody Sullivan voiced support for Mr. Fortin and Ms. Simons' project, but announced that she would neither vote for nor attend the market involving Mr. Ubaldo because she felt that he had made disparaging comments about Pound Ridge in his newsletter, in which he referred to the town as an "isolationist regime."

All other board members voted to approve the permit.

Councilwoman Diane Briggs told the board that she had spoken to Mr. Ubaldo, who said he planned to coordinate his market with Mr. Fortin and Ms. Simons' market.

Following the vote, members of the public raised a number of concerns about the permit request, but pointed out that they were not given the opportunity to publicly comment on it ahead of time because the meeting agenda did not include a vote on the application.

Town attorney Bill Harrington then suggested that the board annul the vote so that it could allow public discussion on the issue before voting again. The board decided it would hold another vote on the issue at its May 10 meeting.

## Food Truck Fridays

Also, the board opened a public hearing to discuss a special permit applica-

tion from the Pound Ridge Partnership for the Food Truck Fridays event it intends to organize on property between Key Bank and Asia Hamachi. The board moved to vote on the application following the hearing.

A number of residents reiterated concerns that an event centered on food trucks would draw customers away from existing restaurants.

Pound Ridge Partnership President James Best said the goal of the event is to raise the visibility of Pound Ridge and its businesses in other towns, while creating a gathering place for residents.

"We're not proposing this to compete with other businesses," he said.

He added that Food Truck Fridays are currently a "pilot project," with only four events scheduled for this summer, beginning June 8. Up to four food trucks will participate in each weekly event.

"We're going to review it after four Fridays to see how it is benefiting the community," he said.

Ms. Sullivan noted that she had personally spoken with business owners who weren't opposed to the concept of food truck events, but who felt that it would not increase their business. She added that she has been contacted by at least 25 people who told her they did not want to bring food trucks to Pound Ridge.

"I understand the motivation and I think the majority probably wants it more than the minority," Ms. Sullivan said. "But as a representative of the minority, I have to vote 'no' tonight."

Other residents at the meeting commented that the noise from live music at the event could cause a potential disturbance to those who live in the vicinity of Scotts Corners. Mr. Best and Town Supervisor Kevin Hansan responded that noise complaints were among the issues they would monitor throughout the pilot.

The board approved the application for Food Truck Fridays by a 4-1 vote, with Ms. Sullivan opposing.