

Village solicits input on energy options

By Kris DiLorenzo

ARDSLEY — Ardsley residents are invited to a public hearing this Monday, March 19, to weigh in on whether Ardsley should participate in Community Choice Aggregation (CCA).

CCA is essentially an energy co-op — a way for Westchester residents to purchase their power as a group, in bulk, through a supplier selected by a bidding process.

At the March 5 village board meeting, Dan Welsh, program director of Westchester Power (WP), a program launched by Sustainable Westchester in

2016, gave a PowerPoint presentation detailing what it would mean for Ardsley to join other Westchester municipalities in purchasing power en masse.

Greenburgh, Lewisboro, Mount Kisco, Pleasantville, Somers, Rye Brook, Bedford, Hastings, Irvington, Larchmont, the Town of Mamaroneck, the Village of Mamaroneck, New Castle, North Salem, New Rochelle, the Town of Ossining, the Village of Ossining, the Village of Pelham, and White Plains are enrolled in the CCA program, and Croton-on-Hudson is soon to join them.

If the Village decides to go with CCA, customers (individuals or small busi-

nesses) can decide whether they want their power supply to be “green” (renewable) or standard energy. Green energy means wind or solar power; right now wind is the energy available through CCA. Coal, oil, gas, or nuclear energy provides standard (or basic) power.

Constellation NewEnergy, Inc., is WP’s power supplier until Dec. 31, when its two-year contract expires. Sustainable Westchester will then begin a new bidding process to determine whether Constellation or another supplier will hold the next two-year contract.

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CCA’s goals are to promote transition to renewable energy and reduce carbon emissions, and in the process give customers competitive rates compared to those of other ESCOs (energy service companies). Rates are fixed for the length of the contract, and are explained on WP’s website: www.westchesterpower.org.

According to Welsh, Westchester County has roughly 70,000 “green” accounts (individuals, households, and businesses). “Since the beginning of the program, the average household has saved \$100 over two years,” he told the Enterprise. Welsh also pointed out that despite unpredictable weather extremes, “You know your rates are

not going to spike.”

Though the source of the energy may be different, the power is still delivered by Con Edison’s infrastructure; CCA doesn’t necessitate any change of wires or equipment. It also doesn’t entail a complicated enrollment process. Ardsley residents would receive a mailing offering them CCA and the option of green or standard energy, with a 30-day deadline to reply. No one is obligated to participate, and anyone can opt out at any time, without paying an exit fee.

Before that happens, WP must give a presentation to the Public Service Commission, and offer public information sessions in Ardsley. “The PSC is serious about giving people a chance for feedback,” Welsh said.

At the March 5 meeting, the board passed a resolution to hold the upcoming public hearing at Village Hall to consider a local law establishing a CCA pro-

gram in Ardsley. The law would require adding a new component to the village code, “Community Choice Aggregation (Energy) Program,” giving the definition of CCA, explaining relevant terminology and opt-out procedures, and stating the Village’s reasons for adopting CCA.

Welsh expressed enthusiasm for what CCA has accomplished in Westchester and what might happen next. “This is a program that brings us all together to make some positive changes on the environmental side,” he commented. “We’re now in dialogue with big solar developers who want to do some work in Westchester.”

Solarization is likely to happen in Ardsley, though at the moment not through CCA. Welsh said he sees an opportunity there: “If there are sites in Ardsley, we’d love to know about them to see if we can help create a scheme to maximize impact and the return on solar efforts.”