

PACE Financing Now Available in Suffolk County for Large Clean Energy Retrofits of Commercial Buildings



*Keynote Speaker,
Suffolk County
Executive
Steve Bellone*

The fall meeting of the **Long Island Clean Energy Leadership Task Force** took place on Friday September 28, 2018 at Molloy College Suffolk Center in Farmingdale, and featured Suffolk County Executive Steve Bellone as keynote speaker.

Sustainability Institute at Molloy College executive director, Neal Lewis opened the meeting and welcomed attendees. Neal detailed the agenda for the day, and then followed up on the previous Earth Day meeting of the *Task Force* in which Commercial PACE—a powerful financing tool for large clean energy projects—was discussed at length by Mark Thielking of Energize

NY. The follow up at this meeting is Suffolk County Executive Steve Bellone's announcement today that the Commercial PACE program is now fully operational in Suffolk County. Meanwhile, a bill has been introduced in the Nassau Legis., so the program could soon be available island-wide.

Neal went on to highlight the local success of the non-profit collaborative project of Long Island towns, com-

munity organizations and Molloy College that is the *Long Island Green Homes (LIGH)*, which recently received a grant extension from NY-SERDA. Locally, PSEG-Long Island administers the program. After the latest three-year effort of the project, Neal pointed out that the program has succeeded in arranging for more than 1000 home energy audits to be conducted for homeowners across Long Island, and while not all audits result in

>> CONT. PAGE TWO

“ Long Island is at just as great a risk from climate change as anywhere in the world. Leadership is needed and state and local governments have to step up. ”

- Steve Bellone

completed renovations, the completed audits did result in \$5.5 million in local revenue from the renovations that were directly related to the initiative. Furthermore, Neal pointed out that when Steve Bellone was town supervisor of Babylon and with long-time *task force* participants—Dorian Dale and Sammy Chu—as part of his Babylon team, they launched both the first PACE financing program in the nation, and the Long Island Green Homes program, and that we are “still carrying it forward.” Neal then pointed out that Chuck Schwartz from the *Long Island Green Homes* program was in attendance and is available to answer questions about home energy audits and efficiency retrofits.

Draft White Paper Discussed

After a go-around of introductions by attendees Neal opened the floor for feedback and discussion on a policy analysis white paper that the *Sustainability Institute* is in the process of writing. He began by directing attention to a New York Times article in the meeting’s packet. California, is the first state in the nation to require solar energy for new residential construction; set to take effect in 2020. Neal noted the significance and positive impact of such a bold policy, and then shifted the focus



Neal Lewis, Executive Director, Sustainability Institute – welcomes attendees

“Our mission keeps getting bigger. Climate change is an existential threat, so the challenge is extraordinary. As much as these program accomplishments are significant, we still have to keep pushing.”

- Neal Lewis

from residential solar to commercial solar. Neal pointed to support for the idea that all new commercial construction should be mandated to include solar from the LI Regional Sustainability Plan created a few years ago, which evaluated whether large-scale commercial building construction should be required to include solar.

Most of the feedback for the idea of a solar mandate from the *Task Force* was positive, but more info was needed. Questions were also asked about lagging statistics on average energy usage;

costs vs. benefits of complying with a solar mandate; should EV charging also be included? How to determine the right amount of PV for the mandate?

Neal promised that the Sustainability Institute at Molloy College, will circulate drafts of the white paper to those with expertise and interest in the subject matter, and to then release a final version of the paper at the next meeting of the *Task Force* in December 2018.

Keynote speaker **Suffolk County Executive, Steve Bellone** began his address by stating the need—as Babylon Town Supervisor and now County Executive—for local and regional leadership to “step up” on climate change and other major environmental issues we face today “as our national government [recedes] from leadership on confronting what is an existential challenge to our world.” He also highlighted that the “beauty of our system” allows state and local governments to step in and act on climate change, and that is exactly what we should be doing.



County Executive Steve Bellone addressing the *Task Force*

One of Bellone's environmental efforts as Babylon Town Supervisor included establishing the *Long Island Green Homes* program (discussed earlier), an initiative to provide free home energy audits to homeowners. Bellone stated that when he and his team were working to address climate change on a local level, energy efficiency kept coming up as a solution. As 40% of our carbon footprint is produced by energy consumption in buildings, and the fact that 65,000 homes in the Town of Babylon were "massively energy inefficient," the Long Island Green Homes program seemed like a viable path towards energy efficiency and the creation of local jobs.

The County Executive then addressed his big announcement on the topic that the *Task Force* has followed very closely and is well informed, that is, that Commercial PACE financing is now available in Suffolk County. PACE financing is an important tool that allows companies to fund large clean energy retrofits, and solar-roofs of commercial buildings with off balance-sheet financing at favorable terms, and with no out-of-pocket expenses. (For more information about *Commercial PACE*, see: <http://commercial.energizeny.org>.)

The County Executive then took questions from the *Task Force*. Several people picked up upon the theme of the need for local leadership on environmental issues and commended Suffolk on the county's leadership on energy issues. (Suffolk County is a *Clean Energy Community*, a *Solsmart* community, and a *Climate Smart Community*.)

The *Task Force* next welcomed **Marjaneh Issapour, Director of the Renewable Energy & Sustainability Center at Farmingdale State College** to discuss

her Clean Energy Workforce Development program. As director of the Sustainability Center at Farmingdale State College, she announced receiving a \$791K grant to help them "facilitate and develop more workforce training



Marjaneh Issapour, Director, Renewable Energy & Sustainability Center at Farmingdale State College

programs at [the] college." The grant is the largest grant that has been funneled into the SUNY system by Governor Andrew Cuomo for performance improvement and was received owing in part to existing aspects of the campus, including the presence of 100 kw array of solar panels, 20 charging stations, and 3 small wind turbines.

The grant will help create training programs for Long Islanders to become certified in the renewable energy sector. One such program underway is a geothermal training program done in collaboration with PSEG-Long Island for inspectors and installers. Ms. Issapour noted that since the training is expensive, the Work Development Institute will be able to reimburse employers who have employees in the training.

Another program that is new and upcoming is an offshore wind training program that will likely be a one-year non-credit program to train wind energy technicians in collaboration with SUNY Maritime, where students will learn about and become internationally accredited in sea survival and safety. A

major goal of these programs is to take from the local pool of talent and retrain professionals.

Jessica Price, PhD, Landscape Conservation Ecologist, The Nature Conservancy was welcomed to the podium next to provide an overview of the Long Island *Solar Road Map*. The goal of the project, Price said, is to "flip the script" around large scale installations on Long Island and work to find agreements among stakeholders on where solar installations should go, provide some information about the technical, economic and social feasibility of those installations, and then really try to collaboratively create strategic recommendations about how to lower the barriers to installation. She outlined a four step process that will:

- 1) Endeavor to work collaboratively
- 2) Use spatial analysis to identify low impact sites
- 3) Assess the economic, technical, and social feasibility of those sites
- 4) Create solutions together

Dr. Price added that Long Island has a pretty high energy demand compared to other parts of the country, but a relatively isolated electric grid so it makes sense for the region to generate energy as close to the site of use as possible. To meet renewable energy goals, somewhere around 160 additional megawatts is needed, and Long Island has more solar energy potential than any



Jessica Price, PhD, The Nature Conservancy

other part of the state. She added the fact that across the United States only 40% of households can support renewable energy on rooftops, so 60% are left without access to solar. Community-shared solar, however, offers the chance to address this problem, but Ms. Price added, "this means space is necessary and space is a commodity in short supply on Long Island."

Price concluded her presentation by calling for participation in the new consortium and made clear that they were "not looking to sit in a room with people that always agree on everything," but rather, expressed a desire to identify barriers and to collaboratively develop solutions to overcome them. She went further to outline the roles of the consortium to inform our goals and processes, help generate and deliver results, to develop recommendations and then to help implement these strategies. She wrapped up by earnestly appealed to attendees to "come to a meeting, let's start asking the right questions, and then all go about the work to answer them," as she referred to the sign-up sheet being distributed in the room for



Sammy Chu, Chair, U.S.Green Building Council-LI and CEO, Edgewise Energy



the purpose of participating in the consortium.

Sammy Chu, Chair, LI Chapter USGBC and CEO at Edgewise Energy provided an overview of the newly launched **Drive Electric Long Island** Coalition, recent efforts and future plans. He began by pointing out that in critical conversations about sustainability and energy use, transportation can sometimes get lost in the discussion, when it should be key. On this topic, he noted the (Oct. 19) Sustainable Transportation Conference at Farmingdale State College. He then pointed to the recent success the coalition had in the creation of the *Long Island Bike Sharing Program*, and strongly encouraged more cooperative efforts to achieve additional accomplishments.

Mr. Chu announced that the coalition is seeking partners, and in particular, locations for future "Ride and Shares" events. He added that he expects that the coalition will be pushing to ensure that they are identifying investment in electric vehicle infrastructure and support EV incentives. He concluded his presentation by thanking the *LI Clean Energy Leadership Task Force* organizers for the longevity and

quality of such a forum for the sharing of knowledge and ideas.

Contact the USGBC-Long Island for more info about the *Drive Electric Long Island Coalition*: info@usgbc-li.org.



Participating in *Task Force* discussions, former Congressman George Hochbrueckner, above, and below, Lynn Arthur, Peak Power LI.



The **L.I. Clean Energy Leadership Task Force**, is a project of the *Sustainability Institute at Molloy College*.

Since 2004, the mission of the *Task Force* is to convene leaders, facilitate the exchange of information and ideas, and foster collaborations to identify regional leadership that advances plans, policies, and programs to mitigate climate change, reduce our carbon footprint, cut local air pollution, create green jobs and build a clean energy sector on Long Island.

7180 Republic Airport Farmingdale, New York 11735



Newsletter Editor:
Demo Maratos, Communications Director
(dmaratos@si.molloy.edu)