

Local Collaboration Can Bring Cost Savings, Green Electricity to Pittsford Residents

Last month I joined with Irondequoit Town Supervisor Dave Seeley and Brighton Town Supervisor Bill Moehle to announce that the three Towns, together with the Village of Pittsford, are moving forward to explore obtaining electricity for our communities from 100% renewable sources, at a cost below the RG&E electricity rate. This joint procurement would pave the way for a 100% renewable default energy product for residential and small business utility customers in these municipalities.

The Town of Pittsford’s commitment to sustainability goes back at least as far as our Greenprint, which preserved two-thirds of the then-remaining farmland in Town in the 1990s. We’ve carried on with that commitment through the years, more recently earning designation by the State in 2017 as a Clean Energy Community and successfully competing for a State grant in 2018 to solarize the lodges at King’s Bend Park and to install a second electric vehicle charging station.

The towns of Brighton, Pittsford and Irondequoit and the Village of Pittsford each have executed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to allow for the joint selection of a third-party administrator to seek bids for a 100% renewable clean energy product at a price to consumers lower than the RG&E rate. Should we obtain such a bid and move forward, residents would receive electricity from a new supplier, through RG&E’s transmission lines. This initiative is made possible through the Community Choice Aggregation (CCA) Program, authorized by the New York State Public Service Commission. CCA allows participating local governments to procure an energy supply on behalf of its utility customers, often at a lower cost. Under the State program, any resident wishing to opt out of the CCA program may do so, without penalty, and continue to receive electricity from RG&E or their current supplier. You can decide to opt out at any time, so if you proceed under the CCA program and later choose to opt out, you may do so without penalty.

Community Choice Aggregation can effectively leverage combined buying power to obtain sustainable energy at lower cost. Joining with other municipalities puts Pittsford in a stronger position to be able to provide residents with energy from 100% renewable sources, at a cost lower than the regular RG&E rate.

CCA is a relatively new concept in New York, with a successful demonstration program in Westchester County paving the way for a statewide initiative. Since its launch in 2016, Westchester Power – the first CCA program in New York – has saved ratepayers nearly \$10 million, with most municipalities choosing a 100% green supply. As Matt Hallady of the Genesee/Finger Lakes Regional Planning Council has noted, our collaboration to pursue Community Choice Aggregation is a milestone in advancing this innovative energy model for the Finger Lakes region.

As a next step, Pittsford and the other three municipalities will issue a Request for Proposals, inviting potential CCA administrators to respond. The municipalities will make a selection based on which administrator responding to the RFP is best able to meet the goals of the program, to work successfully with the partnering communities, and is best able to provide customer service to our residents. Once we select an administrator, the administrator can begin soliciting bids. The administrator’s compensation for its services will come from the electricity supplier selected. The Towns and Village will not incur this expense. The Memorandum of Understanding allows any of the municipalities to go its own way on CCA if it determines that it is not in the best interest of its residents to move forward jointly with the other municipalities.

This new partnership represents one of the largest collaborative CCA efforts in New York State outside of Westchester County, encompassing potentially over 50,000 utility customers. Through competition, it offers a way to procure cleaner energy, to bring about real change regarding our energy use and to provide a cost saving to Pittsford residents. It carries forward our community’s commitment to a sustainable future. It exemplifies the collaborative and fiscally responsible principles that have characterized Pittsford’s approach to Town government for decades.

As always, should you have any comments about this or any other topic you may reach me directly by phone at 248-6220 or by email at bsmith@townofpittsford.org. My door is open and I answer my own phone. Let me know what *you* think!