

Sustainable Nyack Update: Workshop on LEDs, Plastic Bags and Community Green Power from Sustainability Coordinator, Marcy Denker

The first Village Board workshop for February was devoted to sustainability topics-- new LED streetlights, a public campaign and local law on single use plastic bags, a new project for community-wide green energy.

LED Streetlights

Paul Vesel from RealTerm Energy, the company that is managing Nyack's streetlight conversion project, fielded questions from the board and the public about the new LED fixtures that will be installed later this year. The main concerns were the brightness of the lights and their color temperature. RealTerm will provide a detailed lighting design with recommendations for the fixtures and lighting characteristics, and the village will be able to make adjustments if necessary.

The color temperature, which is measured in kelvins, generally will be 3,000 kelvin range. These lights provide a warmer, yellower light similar to the high-pressure sodium lights that we are accustomed to. In some areas, where more accurate color rendering is considered important, 4000k kelvin lighting may be used.

Since Clarkstown and Orangetown have completed the installation of LED streetlights, there are examples nearby to visit. I will provide information soon about lights at specific locations that can be used for evaluation. A list of Frequently Asked Questions about the LED streetlight project can be found **here**.

Plastic Bags

The Village is exploring options for a law restricting the distribution of single use plastic bags. At the same time the members of the Sustainability Committee and Nyack High School students are creating an outreach program about the issue of shopping bags of all kinds.

At the workshop I presented a brief overview of the main types of provisions that have been included in local laws around New York State, focusing on two examples--Rockland County's proposed law, and the one that Ulster County adopted last year.

Rockland County will hold a public hearing on a proposed plastic bag ordinance in the near future. The draft of the law can be found **here**. It is similar to Piermont's new law prohibiting single use plastic bags which allows merchants to provide thicker plastic shopping bags (no thinner than 2.25 mil) and paper bags with 40% recycled content free of charge.

In contrast to this type of ban, some communities have taken simple fee approach, without a ban. Merchants must charge a fee on disposable bags, which can incentivize customers to bring their own bags, if the fee is high enough to be meaningful.

I recommended that the board take a close look at a new law adopted last year by Ulster County that is a ban/fee hybrid approach, which can be found **here**. It prohibits single use plastic bags and requires fees on paper and other types of bags provided at checkout counters. The merchant keeps the fee, which must be added to the receipt. In public comments submitted to the NYS Plastic Bag Task Force, that Governor Cuomo established year to study the issue, people most frequently chose this type of hybrid option. See the Task Force's report **here**.

Ultimately the goal is to protect the environment from the pollution and climate change impacts of shopping bags as much as possible.

The Sustainability Committee's Subcommittee on Plastic Bags and some Nyack High School students will go out for conversations with business owners in March to discuss ways they may already have addressed these issues and the potential impacts of an ordinance. The board stressed the importance of a phase-in period for merchants to adjust and use up inventory.

NHS students joined the workshop and reported on the Environmental Club's reusable shopping bag fundraiser, proceeds of which will purchase reusable bags to give to local shoppers as part of the bag campaign.

Community Green Power

I gave a brief report about a recent meeting of municipal leaders from several rivertowns about an opportunity to offer all of its residents and small businesses a clean, renewable, fixed rate energy supply that is cheaper than the variable rate supply from O&R. Mayor Hammond affirmed that the Village plans to take the next steps on this initiative, called Community Choice Aggregation. Many communities in Westchester have utilized this bulk purchasing option for green power. See Sustainable Westchester's website to get an idea about how it works.