An Opportunity for Communities to Choose Their Own Energy Future

Week of April 30, 2018

In recent years, the Town of Irondequoit has distinguished itself as one of the area’s most forward-thinking communities with regards to renewable energy practices. This has allowed us to implement many sustainability projects that have the dual benefit of lowering energy consumption and reducing our energy costs.

In 2017, the Town was one of the first in Upstate New York to be certified a Clean Energy Community by the State. This led to our successful award of a grant which will finance the implementation of solar panels on the Public Safety building and the future Department of Public Works, significantly lowering the Town’s utility cost.

We have accomplished much, but continue to keep our eye on the future. In that light, the Town is in the beginning stages of exploring a relatively new state initiative known as Community Choice Aggregation (CCA). While not a new concept, CCA has only recently emerged in New York, thanks to the bold clean energy vision being implemented by Governor Cuomo.

In its most basic form, CCA allows local governments to procure energy supply for utility customers in their municipality. By pooling demand, communities have the leverage to, working with a qualified administrator, negotiate lower fixed rates with energy suppliers.

What’s more, this collective purchasing power makes it much more economically feasible for a community to ensure that a greater percentage of their energy is coming from clean, renewable sources. Is there a green energy mandate? Absolutely not! However, a demonstration program implemented in Westchester County saw most communities select a green product, which resulted in lower, more predictable energy costs for ratepayers.

Furthermore, while the local government does ultimately select a default energy product for its ratepayers, it is very important to emphasize that, under the State regulations, ratepayers who does not wish to participate can opt out at any time. If residents wish to stay with their current product, they could elect to do so.

I would very much like Irondequoit to join the so many other communities across New York in taking a good look at this program and determine if CCA is right for us. Our first step will be to introduce enabling legislation that will simply allow Irondequoit to begin making this decision. I look forward to having a thorough conversation with our community in the coming months.