



Southampton Town aims to be 100 percent green by 2025

By

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Feb. 15--Southampton Town will take several steps this year to move toward its goal of meeting all of the community's energy consumption needs through renewable sources by 2025.

Unlike fossil fuels, renewable energy sources are ones that can be replaced naturally and repeatedly. The ambitious mark requires not only looking to renewable energy -- possibly through a plan that could replace PSEG as the default energy supplier in town -- but also reducing consumption, Southampton Town Deputy Supervisor Frank Zappone said during a recent town board work session.

The town will soon replace its street lights with LED fixtures and add additional electric cars to its municipal fleet of about 75 vehicles, Zappone said. A presentation delivered by Zappone and Lynn Arthur, a member of the town's sustainability committee, also recommended applying for a grant to fund five electric vehicle charging stations in town.

Zappone said the town is considering a Community Choice Aggregation program, which would allow the municipality to negotiate to buy electricity in bulk and perhaps select a new energy supplier. The aggregation programs, which became available in New York in 2016, enable municipalities to seek cheaper and greener power supplies, with that source coming physically or virtually through renewable energy credits, Arthur said after the meeting last Thursday.

"This seems like an interesting option to pursue," she said.

Enrollment would be automatic, though customers could opt out of the program, Zappone said.

The town board would have to adopt legislation creating the program and then designate a program administrator before submitting a request for proposals to provide power. If no suitable bids are submitted, the town could choose not to move forward with the program.

"The value in this legislation is that there is no risk involved," Zappone said, adding that he thinks it will be in place by the end of the year.

A group of municipalities in Westchester County collectively known as Sustainable Westchester was the first in the state to adopt a Community Choice Aggregation program in 2016, but no Long Island cities, towns or villages have done so.

A PSEG spokeswoman noted that the utility allows customers to choose their power provider through its Long Island Choice program, though that doesn't allow them to pool their buying power and only includes service providers licensed by PSEG.

Amending the town code to address facilities for large-scale battery storage was also brought up during the presentation. The power grid could feed the batteries during off-peak usage times and the batteries could pump power back into the grid during peak times, stabilizing the power supply and preventing outages.

"You're going to see more of these types of things," Southampton Town Supervisor Jay Schneiderman said during the work session.

Meeting the town's renewable energy goal hinges largely on a proposal to build 12 to 15 wind turbines off the East End through a project dubbed South Fork Wind Farm, town officials admitted.

"We're sort of banking for offshore wind to come online by 2025," Schneiderman said.

Community Choice Aggregation FYIs

All towns, cities and villages in New York State are eligible to participate.

The program replaces the utility as the default supplier of electricity and/or natural gas for virtually all homes and businesses within a jurisdiction.

Customers have the opportunity to opt out.

Municipalities have access to about 50 hours of free on-demand technical assistance from a Clean Energy Community Coordinator.

The existing utilities continue to deliver reliable power, maintain power lines and respond to service outages.

Source: New York State Energy Research and Development Authority, nysrerda.ny.gov

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Vera Chinese joined Newsday in 2017 and covers the towns of Southampton, East Hampton and Shelter Island. A Long Island native, she has reported on East End issues for 10 years.

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