**[Location, Date]**

In the aftermath of recent storms such as Sandy, Irene, and Lee, electric and gas utilities all over New York State are “storm hardening” against severe weather conditions. Utilities pass the cost of these infrastructural investments on to their customers. **Electric rates in the Hudson Valley, and throughout the state, are already amongst the highest in the country***.[[1]](#footnote-1)*

To combat climbing energy bills, the [Town Board/Village Board/City Council] of [Municipality] passed a resolution on [date] to participate in a cutting-edge initiative that allows municipalities to put out for bid the total amount of natural gas or electricity being purchased by local residents or small businesses.[[2]](#footnote-2) ***Community choice aggregation, or CCA, enables communities to leverage this market clout to negotiate lower rates and achieve local objectives- cost stability, greenhouse gas reduction, reliability, resilience, and job creation***.

[insert quote/comment from local official]

In February of this year, the New York State Public Service Commission approved implementation of a CCA pilot program in Westchester County, to be administered by local non-profit Sustainable Westchester. **This is the first program of its kind in the state.** Sustainable Westchester (and its predecessor organizations), under the persevering and visionary leadership of Co-Chairman Mike Gordon (of Lewisboro).

Under the terms of the Public Service Commission order, the Community Choice Aggregation demonstration project **may only proceed** if the new rate for supply is going to **produce future savings** for homeowners and business owners versus staying with the default utility rate. CCA is revenue supported and not reliant on taxpayer subsidies. The Commission’s approval of this pilot program builds upon Governor Andrew M. Cuomo’s strategic “Reforming the Energy Vision” (REV) plan to spur clean energy innovation and investment, improve customer choice and value, and protect the environment.

Residents will be given a menu of choices, including the option to buy renewable energy. Currently six states, including California, Massachusetts, and Illinois, have operational CCA programs for electricity, several of which offer anywhere from 25%-100% renewables in the energy mix. As of last year, an estimated 2.4 million electricity customers in the U.S. bought green power from a CCA.[[3]](#footnote-3) Sustainable Westchester aims to adapt the best practices from the most successful programs in these states.

**Savings on electricity supply average 5-10% in other states, including the programs offering renewable options.[[4]](#footnote-4) The savings in New York figure to be even greater for natural gas**. With natural gas prices at a thirteen-year low, Sustainable Westchester has urged municipalities countywide to move as quickly as possible to maximize strategic advantage of locking in a price before the market corrects.

Leo Wiegman, Mayor of Croton-on-Hudson, has encouraged all Westchester municipalities to follow Croton’s lead in passing a CCA resolution. “Offering our residents and business owners the opportunity to save on their future electric bills is just one example of the benefits of collaboration among municipalities and aggregating our purchasing power. I have spoken with other municipalities that have successful CCA programs in other states. They are very willing to help us by sharing their processes and documentation to make our pilot program as successful as possible here in Westchester.”

New York residents have had the ability to choose their electricity and natural gas suppliers for over 15 years, and private energy suppliers (ESCOs) now compete alongside the utilities for residential and commercial accounts. However, despite all the new choices available to residential consumers, roughly three-quarters have chosen to stay with the existing utility (ConEd, NYSEG). ESCOs are known for deceptive “teaser rates” and aggressive sales tactics, and residents are finding it difficult to save money by switching because individual small customers lack the necessary negotiating power to command sub-utility rates.

**CCA presents residents with new options in how they buy their power and gas, but they are not compelled to take any action at all**. If they wish, they can do nothing and will be automatically switched to the default option negotiated by Sustainable Westchester (i.e. a low fixed rate). **Residents that wish to stay with [utility] may simply opt out of the program** by calling the utility or returning a pre-paid postcard. Those already in contract with an ESCO may opt-in at any time but must honor the terms of their current contract, including paying any exit fees that may apply. Customers will continue to receive only one bill from [utility] and they will still be responsible for the transmission and delivery of your power and gas, including outage repairs. In the coming months, residents will be receiving further details in the mail about the program. In the meantime, please contact [\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_] with any questions.

1. For most recent data on electric rates, see U.S. Energy Information Administration (www.eia.gov/electricity) [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. See NYS DPS Press Release, “PSC OK’s State’s First Community Choice Aggregation Pilot Program: Energy Demonstration Project in Westchester County Designed to Help Customers Lower Energy Bills” (02/26/15) (http://www3.dps.ny.gov/pscweb/WebFileRoom.nsf/Web/C9DCDFF7232D6C4185257DF80063C456/$File/pr15020.pdf?OpenElement) [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. See National Renewable Energy Laboratory (NREL) Report, “Status and Trends in the U.S. Voluntary Green Power Market (2013 Data)” (November 2014) (http://www.nrel.gov/docs/fy15osti/63052.pdf) [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Ibid [↑](#footnote-ref-4)