

CLIMATE SMART COMMUNITY TASK FORCE
2020 Year-End Report
January 7, 2021

1. Conversion of Ancram Streetlights to LEDs

The Task Force explored various options for converting Ancram's thirty-one streetlights to LEDs. The town convened a public hearing on March 14, 2020 to discuss a proposal from Central Hudson regarding the streetlights. On March 19th, the town board approved the proposal. In the fall of 2020, all streetlights were converted to warm-toned (3,000 K), dark-sky compliant LEDs, saving about 16,000 kWh every year. The reviews that have reached the task force have been positive and no complaints have been received.

2. Conversion of Lighting in Town Hall and the Town Garage to LEDs

As part of the NYSERDA grant process, an energy-efficiency expert provided by the agency recommended that the town convert the lights in town hall and the town garage to LEDs. This was accomplished in the spring and summer of 2020. Grant funds were not used.

3. NYSERDA Clean Energy Communities Grant

Ancram's Bright Idea - Community Energy Efficiency Lighting Program

The task force's intention was to distribute the remaining 225 LED bulbs from this project (from an initial inventory of about 1,425) at the annual Ancram Pig Roast in May 2020. Because of the pandemic this event was not scheduled. Hopefully, the distribution will take place in 2021.

Energy Upgrades at Town Buildings

Pursuant to the NYSERDA grant, about \$71,000 is available for energy efficiency upgrades at town structures. The grant contract expires at the end of the second quarter of 2021, so selected upgrades must be completed, or well underway, by that time.

The task force applied to NYSERDA to use the funds for a geothermal HVAC system at town hall. A geothermal system has a much lower environmental impact than a conventional system which burns propane, a fossil fuel. NYSERDA granted approval. A contractor, Aztech, working with a geothermal system designer paid for by NYSERDA, GeOptimize, estimated that a system would cost the town about \$150,000, less grant funds. An engineering firm retained by the Town, CPL, estimated that the project would cost far more, about \$250,000, less grant funds. Given the cost, as estimated by CPL, the town decided against pursuing this option. The town also had

concerns about finding bidders for the project as some contractors are unwilling to work on a prevailing wage basis, required by municipalities.

The task force then explored an air-source heat pump system for town hall, with expected approval from NYSERDA. An ASHP is more energy efficient than conventional HVAC, although a back-up propane system is often required (unlike a geothermal system, which would not require back-up). Several contractor estimates have been requested. As of the close of 2020, only one had been received, for \$95,000, before utility rebates. The task force encountered the same issue regarding the contractor estimate versus CPL's estimate: CPL estimated that the work would cost far more than had the contractor, about \$270,000, before rebates.

If an ASHP proves too expensive to pursue, the town will likely lose the \$71,000 in grant funds. At this stage in the NYSERDA contract, it won't be possible for the task force to design and gain approval for a different project.

4. Community Solar for Ancram

With the support of Ancram's Conservation Advisory Council, the task force recommended to the town that it partner with Solstice to provide community solar opportunities to Ancram residents. At its meeting of November 19, 2020, the town board approved participation in Solstice's program. Community members that subscribe to a local solar farm affiliated with Solstice will be supporting renewable energy and also receiving a 10% discount on their utility bills. Power will continue to be delivered by Central Hudson. The subscriptions will be with solar farms in the 10-to-20-acre range that are located in the region. Residents who opt-in will get a \$100 Visa gift card. The Town will receive \$100 for each community member who signs up. Solstice has been working with the Task Force on outreach for the program. The outreach plan and materials will be consistent with NYSERDA requirements for a "Solarize" campaign. This will allow the town to gain credit towards Climate Smart Communities certification.

5. Cornell Cooperative Extension

Cornell Cooperative Extension offered its support to Ancram to help it achieve designation as a Climate Smart Community, pending approval from a CCE funder. On October 22, 2020 the task force signed letters of support regarding CCE's offer. It is now waiting for word from CCE.