

Thanksgiving – may there be many more

Thanksgiving Day last week was a reminder of the many marvelous people and other enjoyments in our lives. But, this wonderful holiday – with all of its connections to great food and the bounty of nature, also reminds us that we live in the time of 387. These highly privileged days are purchased by 387 green house gas parts per million on a planet that cannot prosper itself or anything in it unless that number falls below 350.

Perhaps we may yet find the clarity and will to reshape our way of living in time to avert global catastrophe but it is certain we are far from this stage now.

Opportunities are available. Our area is suffused with billions of dollars of solar and wind energy that are delivered free of charge, are non-polluting, inexhaustible, rich in quality jobs and will actually enhance our core industries of agriculture, tourism, health and education as well as add a strong light industrial sector to the local community. Most of our energies on the other hand, are spent either promoting or defending against such planet, health and community destructive economic developments as gas drilling. Gas drilling involves one of the most toxic extracting procedures of all the fossil fuels and is part of the 387 condition that is ruining the future.

Instead, we need to declare as a matter of public law that we shall reduce carbon emission by 20% by 2020, 40% by 2030 and 80% by 2050. We can do our fair share or take the lead in achieving these goals by making certain that weatherization, energy conservation, energy efficiency and renewable energy production are not the exception but the norm in our region. To accomplish these results, we need to inaugurate a sufficiently sized program that will ensure that all buildings will be analyzed, audited for energy savings, retrofitted with insulation and building sealing, outfitted with renewable energy systems and provided with continuing support services. Organization of grant applications, forging new partnerships with local banks, utilities, other investment partners, local contractors and suppliers, securing significant bonding commitment to revolving loan funds, achieving a user-friendly implementation process and monitoring results require the work of many full-time people. In short, we need to redirect local talent and energy found in our economic development agencies, government departments, business community and throughout the citizenry to a shared consensus on the priority of economic development through energy saving and renewable energy resources and their related industries and products.

An inspection of the Tentative 2010 Sullivan County Budget indicates considerable interest in such a new course of action in its introductory section, but does not provide resources for its implementation to hardly any degree. Everyone is aware of the budget crisis, the loss of jobs, loss of positions and cutbacks in benefits. The question is, do we have the right mix of projects, the right priorities measured by allocation of staff and other resources? Are there more creative financial arrangements? When will the incomparable potential for economic recovery through sustainable practices receive the support it deserves?

Of late, there is an upsurge in public participation in government policy. I urge citizens to visit the county website where the budget can be examined and attend the budget hearings, the committee and regular meetings of the county legislature. The Sullivan County Democrat is to be commended for giving page one priority to a very

noticeable display of information on many meetings taking place in the next few weeks.

It's holiday season. It is also the crucial decision-making period for the next year of government operations. Each of us has a responsibility to improve the opportunity for more celebrations like the Thanksgiving of 2009. May there be many more!