

#55 Possibilities for Phase One, Sustainable Energy Commission, (SEC)

This column and several to follow will continue the discussion begun last week in describing some of the green activities that can bring millions in savings, millions in new revenue and jobs, and a cleaner, healthier environment to the Sullivan County region. These are real possibilities made possible by an expert, authentic embrace of community-based project design by the Sullivan County Sustainable Energy Commission and the Economic Development Corporation. What follows is not an actual report of what will be done but a discussion of the possibilities so that the public may be stimulated to engage in advising and consenting as well as creating a profusion of local green initiatives that give power to the movement to green Sullivan.

According to published reports, the Sullivan County Sustainable Energy Commission (SEC) that is in the process of formation has been assigned three phases of work. This column is limited to a brief exploration of possible phase one activities and community benefits.

Phase One – task to be accomplished - audit energy consumption of all County buildings, grounds and vehicles and deliver a comprehensive plan for remediation by July 1 of this year. As soon as the energy saving and building performance measures are begun at the county level, the SEC will begin work with the towns, villages, schools, and as many public and private entities as possible with the goal of realizing high rates of energy efficiency. Done with rigor, expertise and a commitment to purchase locally, train and hire local residents, and employ creative financing, millions in savings and new millions in local business will occur.

It will take several years for this work to be completed. It will require a lot of training – a lot of investment in work force development. There is a lot of job creation here. Jobs for young people and for heads of households. Jobs that have a future. The queue of currently existing buildings to be retrofitted is in the tens of thousands. All new construction should be designed to comply with available best energy and building practices. Current businesses with product in this sector will realize tremendous growth as well as stimulate new growth in service companies. More growth with less product but different, environment and people-friendly product.

Now the marvelous synergies of economic multipliers are harnessed for local benefit rather than operate as they so often do as external multipliers that export profits. In just a few years it should be evident how powerful, how profitable this can be. After all, the only new factor here is a steadfast, emphatic commitment to optimizing local benefit – job creation, profitability, environmental and human health enhancement, stable and lower energy costs, stable or lower taxes, increased revenue for expansion of public services.

There is a lot of project design and early implementation already underway by local business, towns and villages, civic, economic development and environmental groups. The talent of our neighbors and their strong interest in making the necessary changes in the way we live and conduct private and public business, in the way we interact with each other and with the environment, is so much greater than what we currently employ.

Phase One of the Sustainable Energy Commission of Sullivan County can be the start of a new county-wide collaboration so essential to a more robust local economy where social and environmental justice are a natural result. This can be the moment that

Sullivan County resolves to fulfill its part in building the new industrial Revolution that is occurring throughout the nation. For our health, honor and economic sufficiency this achievement of sustainable living must succeed. It will take very different policy priorities, different skills, different work relationships and a great deal of public participation. Installing the capital idea of COLLABORATION as the center of all that is done will be key.

The next several weeks will continue to focus on the possibilities for the Sullivan County Sustainable Energy Commission and then a discussion on the Sullivan County Economic Development Corporation. As details of decisions and activities adopted by these new organizations occur, they will be reported here.