



Cortland County

Industrial Development Agency

Minutes of the Public Hearing For Cortlandville PV, LLC Proposed Project and Related Financial Assistance – May 31, 2024, held at the Cortlandville Town Offices 3577 Terrace Road, Cortland NY 13045

The Public Hearing was called to order at 11 A.M.

Victor Siegle	Resident, Homer NY
Kevin McAuliffe	Counsel, Cortlandville PV, LLC
Brendan O'Bryan	Cortland County IDA/BDC
Karen Niday	Cortland County IDA/BDC
Eric Mulvihill	Cortland County IDA/BDC

Mr. Mulvihill read the notice of Public Hearing as published in the Cortland Standard on May 17th, 2024.

Mr. Victor Siegle of Homer spoke at the hearing, his comments and concerns are attached.

Mr. Mulvihill asked if there were any additional comments on the proposed project, hearing none he closed the hearing at 11:14 A.M.

IDA Public Hearing for Cortlandville PV - 2024.05.31
How to improve Cortland County's energy future

I believe that global warming is real and is accelerating. Global warming is one of the most critical problems our society is facing. Replacing fossil fuels with clean energy is essential for our future. It would be wise to implement solar correctly to make a meaningful improvement over our current energy sources.

The intermittent and unreliable nature of solar electricity is the most important problem that should be solved before today's project or any other Cortland County solar projects are Cortland County. To shape a resilient energy future for Cortland County, all of our all stakeholders must collaborate

Upstate NY is currently in the enviable position that over 92% of our electricity is already carbon-free. Our carbon-free electricity is generated from hydro, nuclear, wind, solar, geothermal, and other renewables.

We cannot replace our remaining fossil fuel usage with solar because energy gaps at night, during rainstorms, under heavy cloud cover, or when ice and snow cover solar panels must now be filled by "fast start" fossil fuels. During these stretches adding more solar panels without storage will NOT provide the electricity we need.

**Imagine if electric cars ran only when the sun was shining.
Imagine if the water in your kitchen faucet ran only when it was raining.**

Adding energy storage to solar power smooths out the delivery of the electricity, making the solar power more reliable and available on demand. If we add energy storage to our solar projects, we will help move NYS towards becoming 100% carbon-free and we will also help our county with energy security. Additional solar energy will be most useful here ONLY when combined with energy storage.

Please read the attached *NY Times* article *Giant Batteries Are Transforming the Way the U.S. Uses Electricity*. Let's learn from the positive experiences of states like California that are far ahead of us in battery storage.

RECOMMENDATION: At the present time proposed solar developments are inappropriate if they do not include corresponding energy storage. Both Cortland County and the Cortland County IDA need a solar and wind taxation policy based on the current appraisal methodology for solar and wind energy systems, not based upon the obsolete and imaginary "dollars

per megawatt” policy. Cortland County and the Cortland County IDA must encourage and subsidize energy storage through tax abatements.

NYSERDA and NYS made a terrible mistake by promoting solar taxation based on the nonsensical concept of “\$/megawatt”. They then made a bigger mistake by allowing solar companies to negotiate their own \$/megawatt rates. NYS has apologized for that mistake by creating the new "Solar and Wind Appraisal Model”. Our IDA is now using the new method for solar appraisals. The IDA should also adopt the new method for solar taxation.

There are at least 7 problems that must be resolved before this project can receive final approval:

First, no energy storage is included, defeating the fundamental requirement to supply electricity when we most need it. Energy storage must be included.

Second, giving a tax abatement for no valid reason to Cortlandville PV pointlessly gives away property taxes needed by our schools, town, and County. The tax abatement must be removed.

Third, the fact that this project will not create any permanent jobs is further evidence that an IDA tax abatement is not appropriate.

Fourth, because we cannot predict future inflation rates and because fixed predictions are often low, a 2% inflation escalator usually becomes an extra, unnecessary gift to the solar developer. The inflation escalators should be based upon inflation measures updated annually.

Fifth, the project location contains an undisclosed forest area of an unknown size. As long as humans must breathe oxygen to survive, forests should NEVER be cut down for solar panels.

Sixth, the full EAF says, “The project will be sited within a fallow field”. From the Internet, “Fallow land is an agricultural technique that consists of not sowing arable land during one or more growing seasons”. “Arable” means land used for or suitable for growing crops. In this case the land was actually used for growing crops. As long as humans continue to require food to survive, productive farmland should never be diverted to solar panels.

Seventh, The supplement to the full EAF states that “The site ... has not in the past many years (5+) been used for farming. That statement is contradicted by “Land has not been farmed for 3 out of last 4 years”

handwritten on Part 3 of the Full EAF. Which one is correct and does the correct answer affect the EAF?

We cannot solve global warming by ourselves, but we can certainly take positive actions. I have composed a detailed plan called ***ELEVATE CORTLAND - Cortland 2040 - Our Sustainable Energy Future***, emphasizing renewable energy, energy efficiency, and community engagement. This plan was intended to stimulate discussion and motivate action. So far, I have not accomplished either of those goals, but giving up is not a useful option.

I know that the year 2040 seems far away, but we will never get there unless we start now. I hope that Cortland County residents will pay more attention to these issues, beginning with serious discussions about potential action sooner than later. Cortland County could become a leader and should not remain lethargic, just waiting for mandates from NYS. Unless we reduce our planet's greenhouse gas concentrations, the Earth will continue to warm, causing a perpetual climate crisis. All of us must deal with this problem, both locally and globally. There is no free lunch when it comes to climate change. Whether we do nothing or we do everything, whatever choices we make will come with considerable costs. How will our society adapt?

Without modern energy systems, our civilization would not exist in Cortland. Unfortunately, we are dependent on the outside world for most of our energy supply. In less time than most people can imagine, our oil and natural gas will run out; we need to be prepared in order to survive here. My conclusion is that solar energy with battery energy storage is the most practical, long-term solution.

RECOMMENDATION: The upcoming Cortland County Strategic Development Plan ("ELEVATE CORTLAND") must include a comprehensive vision, along with explicit objectives and strategies, to forge a sustainable energy future for Cortland County. If we cannot define our energy goals clearly, we have no chance of preventing an eventual energy disaster.

The energy future of Cortland County should not be determined by random, out-of-town solar developers who do not care about Cortland and who are here only for the tax abatements.

RECOMMENDATION: Transforming Cortland County into the first NYS "Carbon Neutral County" would be a great example of how to *ELEVATE CORTLAND*.

RECOMMENDATION: The following organizations, working together on a bipartisan basis, should support and implement *Cortland 2040 - Our Sustainable Future*:

**Cortland County Business Development Corporation (BDC)
Cortland County Industrial Development Agency (IDA)
Cortland County Legislature
Cortland County Planning Department
Cortland Works Career Center
NYS Governor and the NYS Legislature
National Grid
New York Power Authority
New York State Electric and Gas Corporation (NYSEG)
NYS Energy Research & Development Authority (NYSERDA)
SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry (SUNY ESF)**

These coordinated programs would:

Provide electricity when and where it is needed in Cortland County and NYS.

Improve the economic conditions of our residents, and

Deliver long-term carbon dioxide reduction and storage employing the most natural, sustainable techniques.

RECOMMENDATION: The Cortland County Legislature should immediately implement a local law that all new solar energy projects must be accompanied by appropriate energy storage. Most importantly, the law should specify that NO TAX ABATEMENTS should be allocated to solar projects without energy storage.

Modern energy storage systems will enable a reliable and secure electrical grid year-round. For example, Form Energy's rechargeable long-term iron-air batteries are made from iron, one of the safest, cheapest, and most abundant minerals on Earth.

Solar solar energy has been a focal point for conversations and for arguments in Cortland County for more than 10 years. Yet, in the entire decade, there has never been an open, organized public forum to discuss the best energy future for Cortland County, nor has there been an ongoing forum to understand the ever-changing issues with clean energy.

Please think about the best energy future for Cortland County and begin to take the actions necessary to achieve it.

RECOMMENDATION: Under the sponsorship of the BDC, please sponsor and administer a series of forums on "Clean Energy for Cortland". I would be very happy to be a panelist.

In summary, I believe that without energy storage, utility-scale solar panels in Cortland County are not nearly as effective as they could be. If we take

this issue seriously and plan our energy future, we can truly increase our energy security.

Please let me know what I can do to help you achieve these recommendations.

Thank you for your attention and consideration,

Victor Siegle
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This document will be made available to representatives of organizations with solar energy decision-making power in Cortland County:

Legislature – Chairman Kevin Fitch and all Legislators
IDA – Executive Director Brendan O'Bryan, Karen Niday
Town Supervisors - Mike Park, Tom Williams, Corey LaSalle
Cortland County Planning Department – Director of Planning Trisha Hiemstra
Cortland County Attorney – County Attorney Victoria Monty
Attorney & Environmental Engineer – Patrick Snyder

Please request copies from Victor_Siegle@JobOrder.com.