



NEWS FROM THE TOWN OF PENFIELD

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Solar Array at Penfield DPW online

PENFIELD, N.Y., APRIL 3, 2019—The Town of Penfield has completed installation of a 1.2 MW solar photovoltaic array at its DPW complex at 1607 Jackson Road. The solar array was tested and commissioned by RG&E on March 29; it is now online and delivering renewable power to the grid.

The solar array consists of 3,648 solar modules (each 345 watts) driving 38 inverters. The system is expected to generate 1.2 million kilowatt hours of renewable energy annually. Solar panels are attached to pile driven racks and the entire array is fenced in.

The energy produced by this array is directly connected to RG&E's utility grid and is expected to offset approximately 75 percent of the Town of Penfield's overall electrical usage at its main facilities (town hall, community center, DPW). This production is the equivalent of powering 120 households for one year.

"The Town of Penfield has a goal of achieving long-term energy cost reductions and price predictability using clean, sustainable energy for the benefit of the environment and Penfield taxpayers," said supervisor Tony LaFountain. *"The town board, Energy and Environmental Advisory Committee (EEAC), and staff began working with Larsen Engineering in 2013 to explore, then pursue, this solar project."*

Since then, the town has been working with Larsen Engineering to design, fund, and implement a ground-mount solar photovoltaic (PV) array at the DPW complex. Larsen engineers studied the town's historical electric billing records and property assets to identify optimal locations for developing a solar project. Technical and economic criteria were considered for site evaluation, and ultimately Larsen proposed a solar array at the Jackson Road DPW.

The project is being funded through New York State Energy Research and Development Authority's (NYSERDA) NY-Sun solar PV incentive program for grid-connected solar photovoltaic systems.

Like many municipal solar installations, the solar array is being financed through a solar power purchase agreement (PPA)—an agreement in which a developer arranges for the design, permitting, financing and installation of a solar energy system on a customer’s property at little to no cost to taxpayers.

The system is entirely designed, engineered, installed, and funded by developer. The developer sells the power generated to the host customer at a fixed rate that is lower than the local utility’s retail rate.

The customer and developer both benefit from the PPA. The customer benefits short- and long-term from lower, predictable electricity compared to electricity purchase directly from the grid. The developer benefits from income received from the sale of electricity and any tax credits or incentives generated from the system.

PPAs typically range from 10 to 25 years. Throughout the contract period, the developer is responsible for the operation and maintenance of the system. At the end of the PPA contract, the customer may opt to extend the PPA, buy the system from the developer and receive the direct benefit of the low-cost electricity, or have the developer remove the system.

In this case, the customer is the Town of Penfield, the site is the DPW complex at 1607 Jackson Road, the designer is Larsen Engineering, and the developer/provider is Tesla.

Supervisor LaFountain adds, *“I have been asked why we chose solar, and how this system can possibly work in our cloudy, snowy climate. We chose this path because sunlight is a renewable energy resource. Solar electric systems convert energy from the sun into electricity even on cloudy days. Compared to electricity generated by fossil fuels, electricity generated by solar arrays are sustainable and create no noise, air, or water pollution. Importantly, solar-sourced electricity and the ability to lock in electricity costs over a period of time through a PPA will reduce energy costs and save taxpayer dollars.”*

To date, the town has successfully implemented three other solar projects. The first is a small self-sufficient sewer pump station that went online in 2012. Next, a solar powered crosswalk signal was installed at on Scribner Road at Scribner Road elementary school in 2013. That was followed in March, 2014 with a solar panel array installation on the roof of the Harris Whalen Lodge that provides nearly half of that facility’s annual electric needs. This installation has the ability to expand in the future.

The Town of Penfield will continuously look for more ways to reduce energy use through energy efficient lighting (including LED streetlight replacements), HVAC upgrades, improved insulation, window replacements, electric vehicle charging stations, and other sustainable practices.

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