

Historic blizzard raises questions about New York's Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act scoping plan

Following any major storm event like the blizzard we all experienced one month ago, those in positions of leadership often do a post-event analysis to review our overall efforts. We come together to have an open dialogue about what we learned, what we did well in storm response, and what needs improvement. For policymakers, it is often a time to consider (or reconsider) certain policy decisions and assumptions, and see if they still hold up.

NIAGARA COUNTY LEGISLATURE



Becky Wydysh
Chairwoman



A historic blizzard rocked Western New York on Christmas week.

From this perspective, two of my colleagues in the Niagara County Legislature – Irene Myers and Shawn Foti – sent a letter to Gov. Hochul raising very serious concerns regarding New York's Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act (CLCPA) scoping plan. As they point out, the scoping plan makes policy recommendations that seem to completely ignore the realities of a winter storm event like we just faced. I am going to excerpt parts of their letter, which covered three areas – the electricity grid, storm response and residential impact. If you would like to read the full letter in detail, go to <https://tinyurl.com/cat3e7kj>.

Let me say upfront, that neither I nor my colleagues are opposed to policy efforts that look to introduce more environmentally friendly technology into our lives. But it seems the CLCPA scoping plan, when viewed through the prism of a

generational blizzard, raises a lot of questions.

The first set of issues dealt with the electricity grid. The main question is how would blizzard preparation, response and recovery look if CLCPA scoping plan "all electric" mandate was already in effect? Does NY have the resources to build out the current electrical supply grid to meet the goals of the CLCPA, specifically as demand is expected to peak during winter months?

My colleagues raise issues about grid reliability, especially when the vast majority of electric service is above ground. Considering the strong winds exposed the fragility of our above-ground electri-

cal supply, and the lack of visibility made it near impossible for crews to quickly mobilize to restore power, they expressed concern about the reliability of power supply during catastrophic storms.

When it comes to storm response, the issue boils down to can we expect that snow removal efforts with a fleet of non-diesel equipment to be as expeditious and efficient as the diesel heavy equipment we

currently have? How will zero-emission medium- and heavy-duty vehicles perform when tasked with removing a significant amount of snow, clearing vehicles from roadways, and battling conditions to get equipment and manpower where it needs to be to restore power? And what can we expect when all-electric vehicles are stranded and lose their charge? Considering hundreds of cars needed to be towed to makeshift lots, what would a plan be for charging these vehicles once they were claimed by owners?

Last, and most important, the impact the blizzard had on residents raises some very significant questions about the CLCPA. Consider that, because of the

travel bans and overall terrible storm conditions, many people were unable to leave their homes for days. The CLCPA calls for adoption of all-electric building codes that would transition homes from natural gas based hot water, heat and cooking to electric. In this storm, gas fireplaces and gas-powered generators allowed people to continue to heat their homes even if the power was out. If we lost natural gas, even as a backup when electricity goes out, would we not be faced with people freezing in their homes, pipes freezing leading to costly repairs, and many other issues?

Furthermore, an electrical power outage would mean the inability to charge vehicles to evacuate, inability to charge equipment to clear access to our homes, and an inability to cook or use appliances. (How would this work in a boil water advisory?) These are issues with real-world consequences that have never been addressed.

Whether you agree with the goals of the CLCPA scoping plan or not, the fact is, the public needs to have confidence that their basic energy needs can be met – especially in times of extreme conditions. At the same time, you will find few people who are against embracing a fossil fuel-free future, provided the technology is proven and reliable. Rather than fast-track the CLCPA scoping plan, whose goals seem beyond the capacity of the electricity grid, the state's initiative needs to be reexamined in light of the blizzard – and the questions raised by my colleagues and others need to be addressed.

IN THE NEWS

Fashion Outlets hosts Lunar New Year event

Fashion Outlets of Niagara Falls USA is celebrating Lunar New Year from noon to 2 p.m. Friday, Jan. 27. Guests are invited to celebrate the Year of the Rabbit by choosing a lucky red envelope from the Fashion Outlets giving tree. This activity will be hosted at the Lunar New Year-inspired Selfie Station, located between the Aerie and Janie and Jack stores, closest to entrance No. 7.

A press release stated, "At Lunar New Year, it is tradition to gift red envelopes signifying luck and good wishes for the year ahead. Fashion Outlets of Niagara Falls USA has filled its red envelopes with either

store gift cards, promotional items, a packet of store coupons or other free gifts from Polo Ralph Lauren, Vera Bradley, Under Armour, Ding Hao Restaurant and other retailers."

"Our center is proud to share traditional Lunar New Year customs with our guests," said Susan Swiatkowski, Fashion Outlets marketing manager. "We encourage guests to spend their lunch hour with us, choose a red envelope off the giving tree, and take a chance at either a coupon pack, store gift cards or various promotional items."

No purchase is required to participate. One red envelope will be given to each guest while supplies last. For more information, visit www.FashionOutletsNiagara.com.

Meat raffle to benefit Mental Health Assn. in Niagara County

The Mental Health Association in Niagara County will hold a meat raffle fundraiser, starting at 6 p.m. Saturday, Feb. 18, at the St. Johnsbury firehall, 7165 Ward Road, North Tonawanda.

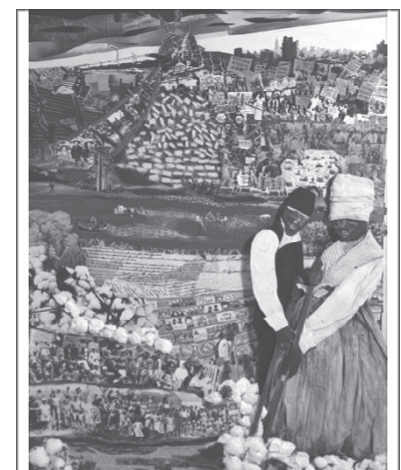
Tickets are priced at \$12 apiece, or \$80 for a table of eight. Ticket price includes beer, wine and soda. There will also be a wine/liquor ring toss and 50/50 raffle. Proceeds from the sales will go toward programming and ser-

vices for those living with a mental health diagnosis in Niagara County.

"I think what's really going to make this meat raffle stand out from others is our emcee for the evening is also a disc jockey. So, DJ Bonkrz will also be spinning tunes all night in addition to calling numbers," Executive Director Daniel Colpoys said.

Attendees must be age 21 or over. Snacks are permitted to be brought into the event, but no outside alcohol is allowed. Interested individuals can purchase tickets by calling 716-433-3780 or via email at dcolpoys@mhanc.com.

It is the mission of The Mental Health Association in Niagara County Inc. to promote mental wellness by sponsoring and implementing advocacy, education and community service programs.



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