

Broderick encouraging input from residents on solar measure

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In a findings review, elected leaders stated, "the Town Board finds a growing need to properly site all types of solar energy systems within the boundaries of the Town of Lewiston to protect residential, business areas and other land uses, to preserve the overall beauty, nature and character of the Town of Lewiston, to promote the effective and efficient use of solar energy resources, and to protect the health, safety and general welfare of the citizens of the Town of Lewiston."

But it also observed, "Solar energy systems deplete land available for other uses, introduce industrial usage into other non-industrial areas, and can pose environmental challenges and compete with other activities." Additionally, "Solar energy systems need to be regulated from permitting through construction and ultimately for their removal when no longer utilized."

The Town Board earlier instituted a moratorium on an existing local solar law following the residents' opposition. Broderick

said he was actually surprised at the public outcry.

"I myself doubted the kickback from solar, I expected it from wind, but not solar," he said.

Recalling how the town drafted the first version of its solar law, he said Lewiston initially reviewed the solar ordinances approved earlier by communities such as Wheatfield and Cambria and then tightened various provisions of those measures in order to further protect town interests.

"We reviewed the local laws that were (already) very restrictive; we made them more restrictive. It was a good law," Broderick said of the initial measure. "We held public hearings; nobody opposed it - so we passed it. Then came the opposition."

In response, he said Town Board members, town attorneys, officials and Building Inspector Tim Masters went back to work, seeking to improve the measure.

"We then reviewed it further with respect to visual screening. Screening was a big issue from all the board members; we also changed the setbacks," Broderick

said. "We listened to the public, our committee members, our attorney," in drafting this new version."

So what is permitted?

- The measure allows for rooftop, building-mounted and building-integrated systems in all zoning districts throughout the town through a detailed building permit process. A number of provisions covering size, height, etc., are included.

- Ground-mounted systems are permitted as accessory structures, requiring site plan approval (unless restricted by zoning districts).

- Permitted town areas for both systems (rooftop/building-mounted, or ground-mounted) include: open space preservation and recreation districts; business districts; rural business districts; planned development districts when included; and all industrial districts. Also, one-family residence districts (R-1); rural residential transitional districts (RAT); rural residential districts (RR); two-family residence districts (R-2); transitional neigh-

borhood development districts (TND); or publicly owned lots (PO). The latter being "only if the lot on which the ground-mounted solar energy system is situated is greater than two acres."

- It provides for utility-scale solar energy systems in rural residential districts and in all industrial districts by special use permit. Solar installations equipped with electrical energy storage (battery systems) are only permitted for industrial districts.

- The law also contains a large number of provisions covering installation, operation and post-use criteria for the solar installations. Included are: placement/construction and major modifications of solar energy systems; general criteria applicable to building, roof-mounted or ground mounted systems; special use permit requirements for utility-scale solar energy systems; special use permit criteria (requirements); maintenance procedures for operating systems; and provisions covering obsolete systems/abandonment/removal and return to the former land use. Further details

are found throughout the 14-page PDF.

The measure does not include any property or structures in the Village of Lewiston.

Broderick closed by encouraging town residents to provide their input on the proposed solar law.

Monday's Town Hall hearing will be open to the public, but with limited seating, and COVID-19 safety protocols in place. The session will also be available online on Zoom via a Facebook Live link found on the town's website, www.townoflewiston.us.

Broderick said public comment is welcomed and encouraged. Residents can review the document online beforehand and submit comments for entry into the official town record; they can attend the Town Hall session in person and preschedule their commentary; and they are also welcome to view the session via Zoom and submit their commentaries after via email.

"The Town Board wants to hear from residents," Broderick said.

EOP still active in making positive impact in students

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As of Tuesday, Nov. 17, EOP students have a brand-new space to call home. NCCC cut the ribbon on a larger, more student-friendly office. More important than the office are the people who run the program on campus.

As an NCCC alumna and former EOP student herself, An-

gela Jackson, EOP coordinator at NCCC, has a valuable perspective when it comes to the population she serves.

"Being able to work at my alma mater is awesome in and of itself; however, being a former EOP student and being able to oversee and help shape the new EOP at NCCC was a dream opportunity

for me," Jackson said.

Not all high school students receive the guidance and support needed to pursue their goals in higher education, or may not feel they are "college material," Jackson noted. Because of her own experience, she recognizes the importance of having a presence in high school to illustrate possibilities firsthand.

As part of her duties, Jackson will now spend one day a week on-site at Niagara Falls High School, allowing her to have one-on-one time with students to share information about EOP and inform students on exactly what services may be available to them.

While COVID-19 has transitioned many of the services typically offered on-campus to a virtual experience, EOP is still active in making a positive impact in the lives of the students it serves. Jackson said her colleague, Ted Mallwitz, an academic support specialist, is amazing at disarming students and creating a safe space for them while directing them to the appropriate resources needed to assist them in their academic journey.

When asked about the vision of

the future of EOP at NCCC, Jackson envisioned the program doubling the population it serves and, hopefully, providing even more financial support for students.

"The program has survived 52 years; I hope we have another 52," she said.

The NCCC educational opportunity program helps through mentorship, academic programs, financial assistance, counseling/advising, and other campus support services to those who are first-generation college students, and/or from low-income and educationally disadvantaged backgrounds. The comprehensive program of support services includes advising, learning skills development, tutoring and academic advisement. For more information about the program, call 614-5977 or email eop@niagaracc.suny.edu.



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