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## **For Westchester Towns, a New Type of Energy Contract**

By Joseph De Avila

A group of 17 Westchester municipalities has signed an energy contract that is the first of its kind in New York state.

Sustainable Westchester reached the two-year agreement with ConEdison Solutions to supply 90,000 homes and small businesses with electricity at a fixed rate generated from wind, solar and hydro projects.

Utility company Consolidated Edison Co. of New York, a sister company of ConEdison Solutions, now supplies these homes and businesses with electricity at a fluctuating rate from traditional sources, such as natural gas and nuclear.

Under the contract, energy users will be able to select an option of 100% renewable energy or a slightly cheaper option that includes a mix of renewable and traditional energy.

Sustainable Westchester says the homeowners and businesses will collectively save \$4 million to \$5 million a year during the life of the contract, compared with the rates they paid over the past 12 months.

“It’s a great opportunity to reduce energy costs and shift to cleaner renewable sources of power,” said Noam Bramson, mayor of New Rochelle, one of the cities included in the agreement. “We are pooling demand to give consumers better leverage in the market place.”

Homeowners and small businesses in the 17 communities will automatically be switched over to the new program in May. If residents and business owners don’t want to switch, they can opt to change back to the electricity now supplied by Consolidated Edison Co. of New York.

The energy users in the Westchester communities will pay up to \$150 million, with the value depending on how many people opt out, how many choose the 100% renewable-energy option and whether an eight-month contract extension is exercised.

The pact marks the launch of New York’s first so-called community choice aggregation program where groups of municipalities negotiate to buy electricity in bulk. The program launched by the 17 towns is called Westchester Smart Power.

Five energy suppliers responded to Sustainable Westchester’s request for bids on the contract, said Mike Gordon, co-chair of Sustainable Westchester.

Sustainable Westchester also plans to sign another contract that would cover an additional 20,000 homes and businesses in Westchester County.



New York state has pushed for community choice aggregation programs in Gov. Andrew Cuomo's energy program, said Richard Kauffman, chairman of energy & finance for New York.

Communities in Sullivan, Dutchess and Ulster counties are each planning to launch their own community choice aggregation program, Mr. Kauffman said.

Karl Rábago, executive director of the Pace Energy and Climate Center at the Pace Law School, said other communities in New York will be watching how well the program works. "You get a better deal with a bigger purchase. That's smart," Mr. Rábago said.

ConEdison Solutions supplies renewable energy to over 25 community choice aggregation programs in Massachusetts and New Jersey. The Westchester program will be one of its largest aggregation contracts in terms of the number of customers, the company said. "We view this as a groundbreaking contract in New York state," Sam Morgan, regional sales manager for ConEdison Solutions.

The municipalities are: the towns of Bedford, Greenburgh, Mamaroneck, Mount Kisco, New Castle, and Ossining; the villages of Hastings-on-Hudson, Irvington, Larchmont, Mamaroneck, Ossining, Pelham, Pleasantville, Rye Brook, Tarrytown; and cities of New Rochelle and White Plains.