

# Southern Westchester's Energy Dilemma: What Must Consumers Do?

By Marvin Church & Diana Williams



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Southern Westchester energy consumers using delivered natural gas, oil or electricity will certainly be affected by new clean energy policies, demand/supply imbalances and the decommissioning of Indian Point Nuclear Power Plant (Indian Point). As the utilities, energy experts and New York State figure out the details of transitioning to clean energy solutions, consumers are left with many questions and concerns about how to make the right decision in what appears to be a changing and complex field.

These articles will attempt to clarify some of the issues and answer some questions for Southern Westchester consumers; however, it does not supersede Con Edison or New York State agency's/ authority's information. Additionally, while the authors attempt to provide current information, it should be noted that new energy policies emerge at a rapid pace. Every attempt will be made to update information as soon as it can be taken to press.

This article will classify the various types of energy customers in Southern Westchester and then describe the action that customer may take based upon their current energy usage and their future energy needs. Please note: this document is not the final authority about energy decisions. All energy consumers are advised to hire certified energy professionals or consultants to guide them through the process. (More about hiring certified professionals later.) In future publications, different clean energy options will be explored.

## Crucial Energy Deadlines

The dates below correspond to significant events that will affect energy supply and, to a great extent, energy cost in Southern Westchester. The prevailing questions are: Are these dates

firm? Are they set in stone? The answer to both questions is – no one really knows. Nevertheless, climatic changes have become a global priority, and scientists believe that dramatic shifts in human behavior will be needed to save our planet.

- 2019 After March 2019, Con Edison (Con Ed) no longer accepted new gas customers.
- 2021 Indian Point will shut down essentially decreasing electricity supply by 25%.
- 2023 Con Ed plans to resume gas service in Southern Westchester for a period of 20 years
- 2030 New York State Public Service Commission (NYS PSC) has declared a 40% reduction of fossil fuel.
- 2040 Governor Andrew Cuomo expects the state to source 100% of its electricity from renewable energy.
- 2043 Con Ed will terminate gas services again in Southern Westchester.
- 2050 NYS PSC expects 80% reduction of fossil fuel use.

## Energy Consumer Classification

For the purpose of this article, the authors developed a classification of energy consumers in Southern Westchester based upon their current energy usage. "Consumer Action" comments recommend what actions consumers can take in light of new energy policies. Keep in mind that energy policies change rapidly, and the consumer action recommended below are based upon current guidelines. All consumers are advised to pay attention to their supplier notifications and other news about energy changes.

### Class I Consumers

These are current Con Ed gas customers who will be impacted by two dates: (a) year 2040 when the NYS PSC will reduce fossil fuel reduction by 40%, and (b) year 2043 when Con Ed gas supply contract ends. The important question is will NYS PSC extend Con Ed gas supply contracts for New York State after 2043? No, not if PSC is determined to reduce fossil fuel.

Consumer Action: Current Con Ed gas consumers are probably safe for about the next two decades unless of course rich incentives are offered to convert to renewable energy sources. In that case, gas consumers may choose to make the change to renewable energy sources. All consum-

ers are advised to pay attention to their supplier notifications and other news about energy changes.

### Class II Consumers

These are current electric consumers. Most Westchester and New York City customers use electricity in combination with oil or gas; however, there are a few customers who use electricity for all their energy needs. In year 2021 when Indian Point closes, it is very likely that electric rates will substantially increase, and brown outs could become a problem if other significant electric sources are not in place.

Consumer Action: Energy Star products for everyone. There are new products coming into the market that will assist customers reduce their electric usage. The authors would like to see incentives offered to all consumers who adopt devices that make significant improvements in energy consumption. All consumers are advised to pay attention to their supplier notifications and other news about energy changes.

### Class III Consumers

These are current heating oil consumers. Oil heat has been a target for many years because oil burns dirtier than gas and is a high contributor to air pollution. Moreover, as recent as 2018 there was a Con Ed incentive program to pay consumers to move from oil to natural gas. This incentive program is now suspended because of the Con Ed's gas moratorium.

Consumer Action: Oil customers are encouraged to consider swapping oil for renewable sources. NYS will be releasing an incentive program for oil customers that will be described in an upcoming article. All consumers are advised to pay attention to their supplier notifications and other news about energy changes.

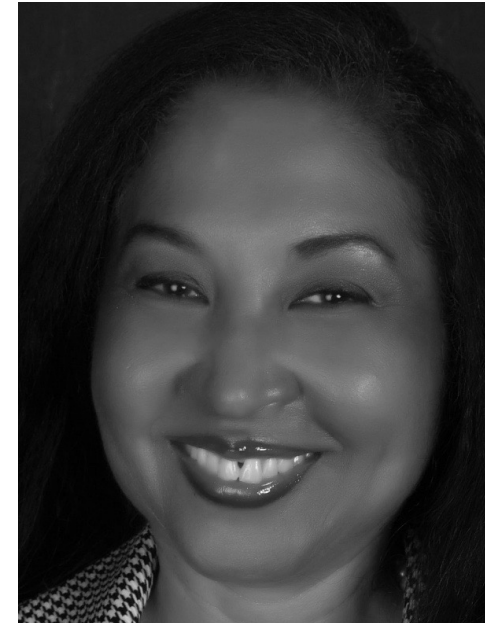
### Class IV Consumers

These are new development consumers. There are a couple of options available in this area.

Consumer Action: New York State will be releasing an incentive program for new development customers that will be described in an upcoming article. All consumers are advised to pay attention to their supplier notifications and other news about energy changes.

## Hiring Qualified Energy Professionals

Just a word of caution: as sure as the sun will set, there will be energy professionals who will sell anything to anyone whether or not its suitable.



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This where New York State Energy Research and Development Authority (NYSERDA) can step in to protect consumers. NYSEDA is the state agency that certifies consultants to work in various energy programs when state incentives are contributed. The certification process is pretty rigorous and NYSEDA constantly monitors the progress of jobs in order to ensure that its certified partners working on these sites are providing the most suitable energy needs for consumers.

The authors, who are certified NYSEDA partners themselves, believe that using NYSEDA or a NYSEDA sponsored agency certified business is the most reliable way to safeguard energy purchases.

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*Marvin and Diana are Mount Vernon residents and have both worked as energy consultants for over 20 years identifying effective energy solutions and financial options for low, middle and market-rate customers. They are principle partners in Comrie Enterprises, LLC, that is a NYSEDA Multifamily Existing Building Partner and a Energize NY Partner. Marvin is currently a member of the Heat Smart Campaign Team where he campaigns for sufficient financial incentives for property owners who might find the cost of renewable energy solution prohibitive. And, Marvin is also a member of the Westchester County Sustainability Committee where he speaks to the concerns of modest income consumers.*