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juana should be considered to avoid increased impaired driving (even if they can't prove it). All in all, it's a pretty weak argument, one that ultimately requires people to police their own use of substances that can cause impairment. We don't accept drunken airline pilots (though they exist) in the workplace nor should we accept high ones (and they will probably also exist). There are already consequences, both criminal and financial, for abuse of these substances. Adding a new substance to the mix doesn't change any of that.

For me personally, taking everything into account, I come down on the side of legalization. I am very concerned about some of the unintended consequences of increased usage, particularly in the workplace. As someone who has spent decades teaching the construction trades about workplace safety, it's something that hits close to home. That said, I also think the employment marketplace will sort out that problem to a large extent, in the same way that abuse of alcohol has been addressed. If you choose to use marijuana, legal or otherwise, you may impair your job performance and indeed, you may lose your job entirely. That's a personal decision, which the consequences must be owned at the individual – not governmental – level.

I also believe that the regulatory scheme that is set up to support legalization needs to recognize the past abuses by our government, particularly in regard to our inner cities. If a huge amount of tax revenue is not earmarked for infrastructure improvements in those cities hardest hit by the War on Drugs, we will have missed a golden opportunity to right a shameful wrong. Without this, we are simply going to add an additional tax to communities that were hard hit by overzealous prosecution and law enforcement abuses, while others continue to profit. If the result of legalization is that the maker of Marlboro adds billions to its bottom line while the inner cities remain mired in blight and garbage, then we will have failed. That result is far more likely than any other, so we need to address it right up front in the legisla-

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The Changing Energy Paradigm

By Marvin Church



MARVIN V. CHURCH

Recent developments in energy policies will eventually redefine the types of energy New Yorkers will use in their homes, businesses and industries. The initial impact is now being seen in Southern Westchester County.

So, what then has changed?

On December 17, 2018, New York State Governor Andrew Cuomo announced a plan to source 100% of New York State's electricity from renewable energy by the year 2040. In conjunction, New York State Public Commission pledged to reduce greenhouse gases 40% by the year 2030 and 80% by the year 2050. Greenhouse gases are produced when fossil fuel like gas, coal and oil burn. This new clean energy initiative means New Yorkers will rely less on fossil fuel and more on forms of renewable energy.

Why are fossil fuels being phased out?

Fossil fuels which includes oil, natural gas and coal is widely used in New York State for home energy. Fossil fuels exist in limited amounts and are formed from the fossils of plants and animals that lived millions of years ago. Consequently, fossil fuels are not renewable forms of energy. Alternatively, renewable energy or non-fossil fuels include solar energy, wind energy, hydroelectric energy, nuclear energy and other newly innovated energy generation systems. These types of energy can be limitless available and are considered clean energy because they do not produce greenhouse gases into the atmosphere. It is greenhouse gases that cause air pollution.

How do New Yorkers now get their energy?

In 2017, New York State derived

28% of its energy from renewable sources. In a matter of about a decade, New York will be expected to increase its source of renewable energy to 40% and in two decades 100% of its electricity must come from renewable sources. Currently, nuclear energy accounts for one third of New York State electricity and is considered an important source of non-fossil fuel energy. This despite the community outcry about the long-term potential for harm when Indian Point Nuclear Power Plant in Westchester County was reported to have failed.

What is happening in Southern Westchester County?

Two significant events will take place in Southern Westchester (everywhere south from Ossining, on the west, to Bedford on the east), that will hasten its path to renewable energy:

1. As a consequence of New York State's plan for clean energy, Con Edison announced that after March 15, 2019 they will no longer accept applications for new gas customers in Southern Westchester.

2. Indian Point that now provides approximately 24% of Westchester County electricity will close in 2021.

Con Edison's abrupt decision to disallow any new gas customers either for new or existing residential, commercial or industrial customers has created a substantial energy deficit in the area. New building owners have halted development plans. And, existing building owner's who may have planned to switch from expensive oil to the much cheaper gas are left in a lurch.

What are the solutions?

New York State Energy Research Development Authority (NYSERDA) is the state agency charged with promoting and providing financial incentives for renewable energy. To that end, NYSERDA and Con Edison have partnered to develop a suitable and affordable renewable energy protocol for Southern Westchester customers by adopting a number of non-pipe solutions that are being used successfully overseas and in other parts of the country but are not as well-known in Westchester. These include air source heat pumps, geothermal/ground source heat pumps, combined heat and power systems, variable refrigerant flow, fuel cells, hydronic distribution systems, solar, wastewater management sys-

tems, wood pellets, air to water heat pumps and other types of innovate systems. NYSERDA has also formed a community outreach and educational unit for Southern Westchester: The Heat Smart Campaign Team is comprised of renewable energy professionals and community organizations.

What about the cost to convert to renewable fuel?

Believe it or not, but there are structures in Westchester County that still use coal for heating. In Mount Vernon alone, 59% of the homes were built before 1950 and may still be using heating oil. It is reported that more than 72% of Westchester's entire building stock still uses fossil fuel for heating. The conversion from fossil fuel to renewable energy will not be cheap, and while NYSERDA will offer financial incentives there are costs that will likely be borne by property owners. For low to middle income property owners those costs may seem substantial to the point of even being prohibitive in some cases.

What's next?

Firstly, NYSERDA and Con Edison will perfect the allowable financial incentives so that energy customers will buy into renewable energy programs. Particular attention is being given to energy customers who may be unable to assume conversion costs. Secondly, The Heat Smart Campaign Team will begin its education and community outreach drive in the affected area. As of this writing, neither NYSERDA nor Con Edison have announced a program roll-out date.

Marvin Church can be reached at renewableenergy@comrie.biz. He is a Mount Vernon resident and has worked as an energy consultant for over 20 years identifying effective energy solutions and financial options for low, middle and market-rate customers. Marvin is a principle partner in Comrie Enterprises, LLC that is a NYSERDA Multifamily Existing Building Partner and a Energize NY Partner. He 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 the low to middle income communities.