

Land Use and Local Government Advisory Panel Meeting

Local Officials Roundtable

Teleconference - WebEx

Thursday, December 3, 2020

1:00PM-3:00PM

At a Glance

- The LULGAP was joined virtually by local officials from across the state for a roundtable discussion
- Sarah provided an overview of the CLCPA process and the LULGAP's current status in developing recommendations, objectives for the roundtable, and emerging themes from the six previous small-group discussions with local officials.
- Prior to the roundtable, Department of State held six small-group discussions with local officials, with the roundtable building upon those conversations.
- The discussion by local officials was guided with questions posed by the moderators and panel members. Officials were asked to provide specific feedback on 1) Accelerating the development of renewable energy, 2) Reducing the carbon footprint of local government operations and facilities, and 3) Promoting smart growth and reducing vehicle miles traveled (VMTs)
- Local officials were asked to provide general feedback on what additional recommendations the panel should consider to aid local governments.
- The roundtable concluded with a brief discussion on next steps and a discussion on how the local officials will continue to be engaged as the LULG develops recommendations for the CAC

Present

Moderator: Catherine Morris-Consensus Building Institute

Local Officials:

- Dan Barusch, Director of Planning and Zoning, Town of Lake George
- Tuona Batchelor, Director of Economic Development, Erie County
- Lisa Broughton, Energy Director/Climate Action Coordinator, Suffolk County
- Casandra Buell, Director of Planning, Lewis County and Town Council, Town of New Bremen
- Michael Cashman, Supervisor, Town of Plattsburgh
- Sage Gerling, City Manager, City of Geneva
- Brian Kulpa, Supervisor, Town of Amherst
- Hal McCabe, Mayor, Village of Homer and Executive Director of Commission on Rural Resources
- Edward Michalenko, Supervisor, Town of Dewitt
- Steve Noble, Mayor, City of Kingston
- Bill Rohr, filling for Matt Ossenfort (County Executive, Montgomery County)
- Martha Robertson, County Legislator, Tompkins County

- Tim Rogers, Mayor, Village of New Paltz
- James Ryan, Mayor, Village of Montour Falls
- Evelyn Wright on behalf of Pat Ryan, County Executive, Ulster County
- Sean Sallie, Deputy Planning Commissioner, Nassau County
- Erik Scrivener, Director, Planning and Solid Waste, Otsego County
- Kathy Sheehan, Mayor, and Jason West, Energy Manager, City of Albany
- Anne Spaulding, Energy and Sustainability Coordinator, City of Rochester
- Eric Wilson, Deputy Dir for Land Use and Buildings, Mayor's Office of Resiliency, New York City

Agency Staff: Paul Beyer-DOS, Brad Tito-NYSERDA, Maria Katchmar-DEC; Josh Hunn-DOS

Panel Members: Sarah Crowell-Chair; Mark Lowery; Gita Nandan and a few others

Public Attendees: Many public attendees including two CAC members and over a dozen staff working group members

Welcome and Introductions

Maria Katchmar: Described meeting procedures (how to participate, etc.)

Sarah Crowell: Brief welcome and presentation of the topic, acknowledged panelists from the prior local government roundtables and panelists introduced themselves. Discussed CLCPA timeline and the emerging themes identified from the local government small group discussions.

- **Objectives for Today**
 - Hearing from our communities
 - Diverse group from all 10 regions of the state
 - Introductions, overview of initial feedback received, bulk of the agenda – discussion around topics
 - Process
 - We are in the recommendation development and outreach portion of the timeline
 - Quick turn-around – 4 months
 - Panel's work is broad and intersects with other panels
 - Coordinating with other panels and experts in the field
 - Benefit of speaking with local officials in smaller groups
 - Broad range of topics that go beyond what we will be able to cover today
 - Thank you to those that participated, appreciate the time, commitment, insights to the process
- **Emerging Themes from previous discussions**
 - Local government are critical to the success of the CLCPA
 - Important role for country and regional entities for advancing these issues
 - While local govts know there are cost savings, they are facing competition for investment
 - State monetary and technical expertise support is critical to success of local action
 - Call for more uniform state mandates with higher ambition

- Need for regional approach to achieving CLCPA goals
- Variety in terms of needs in regional, geographical, rural differences
- EV charging is in high demand
 - Local success stories
 - Challenges we can begin addressing right away
- Incredible group convened today
- Catherine Morris from CBI will lead discussion

Catherine Morris: Welcome, described participation logistics, and began discussion of three topics for the local government roundtable.

- 20 mins a topic, want to hear from as many of the invited officials as possible
 - Keep comments to about 2 mins
- Provide Advisory Panel members the opportunity to ask questions if they have them
 - Pause with 5 mins left to see if there are questions

Topic 1: Accelerating development of renewable energy

Q1. In what ways have you been successful in increasing renewable energy (particularly solar) development?

Q2. What challenges do you face in promoting development of renewable energy?

Q3. What actions can the LULG Panel recommend to support local and regional governments in increasing adoption of renewable energy?

Catherine Morris: Small Group discussions included:

- Desire to identify low impact siting in your jurisdiction; some may have started on this; interested in encouraging development not only on public property but also on private and integrate solar and clean energy into CCA – hoping to hear more about this
- Share success stories and challenges, but translate into recommendations for AP for how they can support

Cassandra Buell: The majority of land in Lewis Co. is agricultural land. In the last 12-18 months, the county has seen a surge in solar development. A few years ago, we had a municipal solar project on county-owned land that powered (inaudible). Lately, we've seen an influx of community solar projects mostly on farmland. That complicates things for our area and (creates) concerns that a lot of our prime farmland will be gobbled up. But we do want to encourage solar development. We don't want to hinder it. We just want to plan for smart growth (inaudible).

In the past few months, the county has worked very closely with DANC (Development Authority of the North Country), the Tug Hill Commission, along with St. Lawrence Co. and Jefferson Co. to take a regional approach on the matter, since we face similar challenges with our land (due to) the increase in solar development. (We've worked together to) create a model municipal solar law that gives our municipalities a framework that they can customize to their local needs. A lot of municipalities don't know where to start.

It's intimidating. There's not a lot to know about solar development...We've had 20 years of wind, so we know a lot about wind. But solar is one of those things where we don't know the long-term impacts.

The Board of Legislatures supported the model law and it was distributed to our municipalities. We're very supportive of solar development. We just want to make sure that our municipalities are aware of what things to look at. We encourage residential, small-scale solar projects (including agricultural projects). The largest challenge for Lewis Co. (and also a double-edged sword) is that we want these farmers to have the extra income from leasing 10 acres for a solar project, but we don't want them (to just go for) the money being dangled in front of them. We want them to think about the (quality of the land) that will be used (for solar). We've worked with our local IDA on their PILOT policies (to ensure that the use of marginal land is incentivized (instead of prime farmland) for solar projects).

Lisa Broughton: We have had success. We built a solar car-port project on six county parking lots and a four-megawatt project at Suffolk Co. airport. Where we need help is (with) interconnection – the interconnection process is very lengthy and expensive, so that has slowed down projects. We understand that there is a carport sweetener for ConEd areas, and we've had carport (solar) developers come out here and realize that the incentive ends at the city border. So, we very much would like to see something extended on Long Island that would (go beyond) what our local utility has incentivized so far. Since completing our project in 2012, we expected to see (solar) carports at every high school and hospital parking lots, etc. (To-date) we only have the county projects and a handful of other (solar) carports that have been done. We just finished the Long Island Solar Roadmap project (it's online), which points to the fact that we have all of these underutilized parking lots that ought to go solar.

We also need help with brownfields. We have a very good land bank program going right now. We've gotten several RFPs and offers that have shown that we have a number of (properties) that would be useful for solar. But we've found that the 10% incentive (from the PSE/PSC/PFC?) does not extend to Long Island. We'd like to see some parity with the rest of the state on those two areas.

Catherine Morris: Thanked LB for mentioning very specific recommendations

Martha Robertson: We have used our IDA for uniform solar incentives, which have made it a lot easier for developers and municipalities that didn't have the ability to manage those agreements. We also have an enhanced energy incentive for buildings that use heat pumps, for example. I'd like to mention community choice aggregation in terms of counties being able to form CCA's. We'd also like to (recommend) that there be start-up money for a CCA coordinator, perhaps at the county level, to make that happen. It's hard for communities to tack that project onto other work that they're doing.

Some of the things that Cassandra and Lisa said bring (to mind) the question of amortization of the cost of connecting to the grid. We find that siting decisions seem to be overwhelmingly driven by how close the site is to the 3 phase lines or substations that they need. NYS, as a whole, needs to green-up the grid and needs to get these large projects and community projects sited well and quickly. If the cost to connect could be amortized across the whole State system as opposed to borne by the single project, I think you'd have more rational siting. You can have developers pay a flat fee or per/megawatt. But if they didn't have to look for sites that were closest to the grid, then we might find sites that are more acceptable to communities and more rational as far as that land use (is placed) in each county.

Anne Spaulding: We've had some success here in the City of Rochester. Our biggest project is related to a superfund site cleanup. We have a former municipal landfill that operated in the city of Rochester that was a superfund site. We did a clean up and part of that land was not useful for any other development. So, we were able to bring in a solar development and have a 2-megawatt solar field installed. We entered into a power purchase agreement with the developer. (As a result,) a couple municipalities are powered by that (solar field). Being a municipality in an urban area, we don't have a lot of space, unfortunately. We do have several other landfills (some that we own and others we don't) that we are eyeing that are not developable for a variety of reasons for re-use as a solar development.

We have a couple small rooftop solar (installations) on our municipal facilities that we own. Those are really good for public outreach – people can see them and consider (adding them to their homes or businesses). One of the big challenges that we have is a high rate of poverty in the City of Rochester and substandard housing, particularly rooftops. So, even if (those residents) were interested or able to get solar, which in a lot of cases they are not...(they would not be able to get it). Unfortunately, the roof issues are a hurdle we are having some trouble overcoming. (Support for) local governments (in trying to get over) those hurdles would be helpful. We're also starting our CCA program, which we're really excited about. We'll be incorporating 100% renewable electricity supply and a community solar aspect in our CCA.

Bill Rohr: It was interesting that Martha Robertson talked about the notion of proximity to the transmission lines as a driver of solar development. In Montgomery Co., we've probably become the solar capital of NYS with literally several hundred megawatts in projects under development right now. There are good things to be said about that and then there are some challenges.

One of the challenges that we've faced is that there is a dynamic policy tension between the facilitation of the development of renewable energy through solar and our farmland protection programs. What we found to be very effective, at the county level, was to develop a model solar ordinance that each of our municipalities could adopt and tweak. It (included) everything from decommissioning practices, bonding, etc. We've had some success in working with local farmers to make them smart negotiators when dealing with solar companies.

Dan Barusch: I'll (provide) a little input on solar from (the perspective of a) smaller rural community...coming from the Town of Lake George of maybe 30 square miles and a full-time population of less than 5,000. We have a decent amount of state-owned land; we're in the Adirondack park. We are limited in the amount of space and municipally owned land that we have available. Like most communities that are small, rural or economically challenged, we don't really have the ability to find large properties to set up these installations. So, I'm happy a few of us have mentioned (the opportunity) of community solar at the State (level and) on down. It is such an important part of increasing the development of solar in general and it gives opportunity to a lot of municipalities like mine to not have to worry about the land, the development and all the things that go into creating a (solar) farm.

What we've done is sign on to a community solar farm in (inaudible -Dekalb). It's in our load zone. We have a subscription now and have minimal responsibility, but it is generating 100% of the electricity for our facilities and 40-50% of overall energy use. Over the life of the (solar) farm, of 25 years, it's going to reduce probably about 250 tons of CO2. It may not sound like a lot to the larger municipalities, but that's 20% of our 2016 baseline. I also sit on the Climate Smart taskforce in the City of Saratoga Springs – they've adopted community solar. Similarly, they did have some space, a capped landfill, where they were able to build a

2.6-megawatt (solar) farm that generates 40% of their electricity use through the city. Community Solar provides a very good opportunity to some of these places that don't have the ability to do it on their own.

Catherine Morris: Do you have one other suggestion for the panel in terms of how to make this easier (or) how to scale it up quicker?

Dan Barusch: It's already been made pretty easy by the State. OGS put out a bid for community solar and selected five participants. I think the way to enhance that is educating local county officials that it exists and not to worry (about) whether you have the land or resources to do it on your own. This is out there (available). It's available and it's a very simple process to get onboard.

Brian Kulpa: We have an agricultural district that we cling to and try to protect as best (as) we can. So, the integration of solar does threaten our last remaining Ag in the Town of Amherst. Something we are thinking of doing is based on the model that we received from Tompkins Co. We've identified Ag productivity that can happen in and around solar fields and are trying to (update our) code now to ensure that if you build solar that the agricultural use of the land is maintained. Incentivizing a balance of Ag with solar would help us. Right now, all of the incentive goes to solar (but) we're looking for groups that will diversify and continue to maintain the soil and create agricultural products here.

Evelyn Wright: We recently put out our second RFP for a solar development on county-owned land. We got bids that were (inaudible) structured and those that were community solar-structured. We ended up going with the community solar option, in part, b/c of the economics and, in part, b/c it allows us to invite other municipalities that don't have the capacity to go through the process themselves. It is another mechanism that can be used to (help) smaller municipalities get into the process.

I want to second legislator Robertson's pleas for county level CCA (inaudible)... I think the counties are really well positioned for that (inaudible). At the county level, we really struggle with the question of trying to turn siting conversations from these one-off fights about big projects to a proactive conversation about where we're going to build. And it's not just true about solar development (but also) agricultural lands, conservation priorities, the siting of housing and (inaudible) commercial facilities. ... It would be helpful to take a regional master planning approach, where we really proactively take a look at our siting criteria and identify sites (inaudible). We've been working with groups that were part of the 2013 regional sustainability regional planning process around that, but it would be great if the state could resource some of those efforts (inaudible).

Catherine Morris: So, a more regional approach to planning and proactively identifying sites. You're the second person to raise this issue about counties wanting the ability to do more community choice aggregation. I'll pause here to see if we have any questions from the advisory panel and then come back to that to see 'what would be the ask of the advisory panel to make that feasible'?

Gita Nandan: To those running municipalities, how do you feel about being able to use those government-owned buildings and schools to expand solar and renewable energy on municipal properties? I find that's usually one of the last places where solar is located. What would incentivize that and what are the challenges to making that happen?

Brian Kulpa: One of the challenges has been getting the timing and sequencing between putting the solar arrays onto a roof and timing the roof product so that they have the same life cycle. Otherwise it becomes very costly to take solar off of a municipal roof and put it back on (in order to repair or replace the roof).

Tuona Batchelor: The City of Buffalo and Erie Co. partnered up with some of our local universities to start addressing some of those issues (around) getting solar onto municipal buildings. We are running into that exact same issue. We're not building new; these are older buildings. So, it is a bit cost prohibitive sometimes. We've had mixed results. It is something that we've been working on in Erie Co. But we've got a long way to go.

Kathy Sheehan: From a feasibility standpoint, you see the large roofs on our school buildings. But they are not always ideally suited based on the amount of sunlight (absorbed) or the orientation of that roof. Another thing we've come up against, we had a solar project on an ice rink that resulted in a bunch of trees being taken down and people really care about their trees. So, there are community issues on that as well. And then there's still some perception issues; with concerns about 5G, (likewise), there are people who are concerned about solar panels. So, solar panels on a school or in close proximity to a playground, we do find that there is still a fair amount of education that needs to happen. That might be an area where the panel can make some recommendations.

Martha Robertson: 20 years ago, we put solar on our public library that's still cooking along and, about 10 years ago, we had Liberty Resource come and put solar on about 7 or 8 buildings (for which we didn't use the energy, but instead sold it). We have a new green capital plan in the works, where we are looking to see if there are additional sites we can use. I think it's an excellent way to show the public that this is a good investment. So far, we haven't come up with the roofing problems. I'll also mention solar hot water heating, for example for our jail. We've saved a lot of energy and money by incorporating that into rooftop solar, so I'd encourage people to give it a shot.

Catherine Morris and others: Made a request for anyone on the call with a solar model law to share it (link, etc.) with the hosts.

Tim Rogers: What I always find curious is when there is economic development money from the state for different projects, it seems like there could be requirements or stronger encouragement that new buildings would have solar arrays (installed). We're in the midst of constructing a new fire station with money from the Governor's Office of Storm Recovery and we had a very hard time designing the building. It's actually worked out really well; we've just gotten some bids back from various contractors. But (during) our first effort to get bids, the project was entirely too expensive and not green at all. We basically jettisoned the entire project, started over and re-designed a fire station that's closer to cutting edge, in terms of sustainability. It will actually be less expensive than the (original) project and this project will be greener. The pushback that we got initially was that it was 'too expensive to do green' and (now) we have a great case study (showing) that's not true. The state could encourage more of that.

Catherine Morris: Particularly, if they are getting incentives or any kind of financial assistance (by) conditioning on integrating those sustainable practices.

Topic 2: Reducing the carbon footprint of local government operations and facilities

Q1. How have you been successful in reducing your own GHG emissions?

Q2. What are the challenges you face in reducing emissions in government buildings, wastewater treatment, vehicle fleets, etc.?

Q3. What actions should be LULG recommend to support local government to reduce GHG emissions?

Catherine Morris: Small group discussions included:

- Need to gather data, set benchmarks
- Raised examples of converting light in buildings, EE retrofits

Dan Barusch: Both the town and village of Lake George are certified as climate smart and clean energy communities. We are the first two municipalities to have that dual certification and are very proud of that b/c we only started comprehensive climate planning in 2015. Shortly thereafter, we jumped right into those two programs. DEC and OCC have been integral to the success that we've had in those programs. Monday, I said that the assistance provided to, particularly, smaller municipalities (that typically have no planning staff at all), for instance, by the Capital Region Planning Commission, is invaluable. I would highly encourage the state to continue that assistance. I think for the north country, it's ANCA, ...and each region has an entity that assists with that planning effort.

A brief synopsis of how we got there: we kept track of all our actions from those programs, counted up the points and said, 'how many more do we need to get there?' We needed a good 50-60 points to get certified in climate smart and a few high impact action items for clean energy. The way we got there was by developing a comprehensive climate action plan. The money that gave us the ability to develop that plan came from a climate smart communities grant. I always hear a lot about money not being there. NYS is one of the best financiers of climate planning in this country. The money is there, but you've got to find it. Once you find it, you apply for it and hopefully, you'll win. We only asked for \$25,000. But it was a 50/50 match; we spent \$50,000 and did a comprehensive climate action plan. Out of that plan, we were awarded 60 points toward the program, which pushed us over the edge (to obtain the) certification. The plan identifies really proactive measures for us to reduce our carbon footprint. We sent the same goals to the CLCPA using the 2016 baseline and we're already about 15% of the way there today.

Catherine Morris: So, the resources are there. Maybe part of the question is whether everybody is aware that all of the resources are there to help them do that kind of planning...

Steve Noble: ...and the state continuing (to fund) them.

Sage Gerling: (I've been) on these calls twice this week and have learned a lot. I think this is a very valuable resource (and hope it) will continue and grow, with more municipalities continuing to share and learn from each other. I want to mention the idea of trying to incentivize revenue generation from the reduction of emissions. We have a wastewater treatment plant, an anerobic digester (I misspoke on Monday – calling it aerobic) that creates a class A biosolid. We are able to spread it over farm fields and it reduces the amount of nitrogen and ammonia in the product. (But,) we want to sell that product. One of the reasons is b/c it is actually very expensive for a municipality or regional authority to go to an anerobic digestion system. But that is a way to reduce, on the wastewater side, the sludge that goes to the landfill and contributes to the smell that some communities like ours (have), with two landfills that can be seen from our community. We also have a new compost facility. Two trenches have been constructed thanks to DEC grants and funding through the county. I would love to see resources to think through how we might work with private companies or our colleges, school districts, hospitals, etc. to bring their product here, (regardless of) whether that's generating revenue for the operator or for the municipality, but with the goal

of saving money. I just want to put the message out there to think about how can we generate revenue while we're reducing emissions so that we can fund these projects?

Jason West: In terms of raising revenue while reducing emissions, the City of Albany has an interesting case study. We took advantage of the 2015 state law that allowed us to buy our own streetlights. We're almost finished converting almost 11,000 streetlights to energy efficient LEDs, which is set to save us millions of dollars a year, while reducing our emissions by 2,500 metric tons annually. It also gives us better light and the ability to have things like smart nodes that can do everything from house video cameras, monitor air quality, etc. Besides wastewater, if people look at streetlights as a source of revenue, savings and emissions reductions, (they may realize some benefits). Albany has been very successful at this.

Catherine Morris:: The source of funding was ...what?

Jason West: We actually bonded for it, but it was projected to save us so much (that) the buy back was pretty quick.

Steve Noble: For the City of Kingston, we had the opportunity to be silver certified as a climate smart community and one of the ways we were able to do that was by investing in our own staff. We have (had) a sustainability coordinator for the last decade who works full-time to make sure that we, as a community, are doing everything we can to reduce not only our own government emissions, but also work on community initiatives. One of the ideas that we talked about at our roundtable was the concept of the state helping to support sustainability officials and dept. of environment employees. We participate in DEC's solid waste recycling coordination program, where they reimburse cities half the salary of the recycling coordinator. We think a similar program across NYS to help support those communities that want to invest in local staff to guide their way would go a long way to creating dramatic footprint reductions in our local municipalities. What we've (been able to do) in the City of Kingston and Ulster Co. is b/c we've been able to use staff to help us.

Martha Robertson: We're a silver certified climate smart community as well and we're one of only two counties(with that designation) in the state. We're waiting to hear what the requirement will be for the gold standard... We've found that, (though) we've been able to navigate those programs, it's really hard to navigate state programs in general. The clean energy coordinators have been a big help to many communities; if you could dump all the staffing there... There are so many communities that have no planner at all; maybe they have one code officer or one planner that is supposed to do everything. NYS is going to need every local community to go full steam ahead; it's going to be tough unless there's the actual staffing available. A comment from a former planner: 'If resources and incentives come in the form of competitive grants to local governments, the administrative responsibilities could doom the effort, unless the state entities break from their typical patterns.' So, it's really important that implementation is made as seamless and effortless as possible.

Catherine Morris:: So, building that capacity at the local government level and making it easy for local governments, with the capacity that they have, to get through the process to apply for the resources.

Lisa Broughton:: Suffolk Co. was also able to get one of those silver certified awards and we want to thank Dazzle and the staff for all the help along the way. It was difficult, but I am here to say, that it was do-able. But the biggest hurdle I see for the county going forward in this program is: community and county assessment. We were able to do it prior with a private foundation that provided a \$200,000+ grant to

Nassau/Suffolk Co. with our utility and a couple of non-profits. We would never be able to replicate that and we are (approaching a time when) we are going to need to do it again. What the county was able to do for ourselves was (create) a county assessment for government-owned carbon footprint with the help of an engineer from SUNY Stonybrook; (an intern who was) working on her master's degree. We found it to be a moving target to do an assessment. It was very hard to do an apples to apples comparison. But, based on the best effort we could make, we did reduce our emissions by 7% between 2005-2015. I think that going forward, with either the Climate Smart or Clean Energy Communities programs, there has to be some way to help us with those community assessments.

Catherine Morris: Just for clarification, when you're talking about the assessments, you're (referring to) (inaudible) energy tracking and accounting.

Lisa Broughton: Correct, an overall carbon footprint.

Evelyn Wright: I wanted to add one example of how staffing has been transformative for us. We created a Dept. of the Environment a dozen years ago, started with a single coordinator and now it is a 5-person department. Largely, b/c of our director's ability to navigate and leverage state and federal programs, (inaudible) we were one of the first communities in the state to be climate smart certified (inaudible). Over the past dozen years, they have really been able to build up a whole machinery of government operations where we inventory all of our energy use in all of our buildings, all of our fleet vehicle use, etc. and build that into how our Dept. of Public Works measures and tracks, and how our capital budgeting process gets stuff out. We have a mechanism to track savings from those programs (inaudible). Steve Noble mentioned (an idea) Monday that the state could match a community climate coordinator they way they do the recycling coordinator position (inaudible). I know a lot of communities are trying to do this with volunteers and that can bring a lot of energy (to the project). There's nothing like having staff to (inaudible).

Catherine Morris: So, having staff and funding for that staff is a common theme.

Anne Spaulding: The first thing we did was to complete a greenhouse gases inventory and develop a municipal operations climate action plan. We made the decision to focus on our operations before we branched out into the community-wide stuff. So, we have a pretty good handle on our energy use and emissions. We've done a lot of the same things that other communities have done (for instance) with LED upgrades to streetlights and in our facilities, converting some of our fleet to electric vehicles. One thing that has really helped us is (we've) set up an energy fund that is funded through some of the utility rebates that we get from our upgrade projects. For instance, we received some substantial utility rebates as a result of a number of municipal parking garage lighting upgrades. We then squirreled that money away to set up this fund to do additional projects. Again, the Clean Energy and Climate Smart programs have been instrumental in providing funding to do additional work within our local government operations.

Eric Wilson: Adding to the complexities of moving forward with municipal operations in a sustainable way, we also have to think about simultaneous risk reduction and how we make them perform given the climate risks that we face. In NYC, we have flooding of various types, incl. rainfall, and flooding, and extreme heat issues. In trying to (determine) how we navigate sustainable public services together with climate resilient services is a toughie, so we are looking to collaborate with you guys on that one.

Catherine Morris: It's tough b/c you just have more factors to take into account, like siting and other aspects. Can you provide an example?

Eric Wilson: Siting and design considerations... Especially areas that are located in our special flood hazard area...I was working with our affordable housing agency the other day and we're doing an assessment on a building design that we're intending to perform at a very high level from a sustainability perspective, but it is located in our special flood hazard area. So, how do we incorporate the flood mitigations that are going to make sense to FEMA, to make sure we can get it insured, but also to perform for its residents during a time of flooding. It's really figuring out where we can get the biggest bang for the buck in terms of these interventions. It's different for retrofits than it is for new construction. It's this complicated matrix of interventions on the building side.

Sarah Crowell: Thanked [EW] for bringing up resiliency b/c it is something that was talked about the smaller meetings and is among the categories of recommendations that the LULG Panel has been tasked with developing and will be looking for feedback on going forward.

Ed Michalenko: We (Town of Dewitt) have a considerable amount of flooding. We have 45% of Onondaga Co. industrial lands, so we have a lot of brownfields and neighborhoods with a lot of elderly and people of a lower socio-economic status. So, flooding is a major issue for us. In those watersheds, we've passed a number of ordinances (and added) local protections on the remaining wetlands and floodplains that we have and caught a lot of flack from developers b/c we've (required) additional buffer strips. They tell us that we don't have authority to do that, as it's a state and federal regulation. So, they want to know why we are going above and beyond (existing) regulations. But so far, our ordinances have held up.

We've also required that any new project in the watershed must have a hold capacity matching a 100yr. flood on-site (through their stormwater management). This simple ordinance forces green infrastructure in any new development. We've found that it has helped us with the flooding issue. For the entire watershed, we have 16 sites that we're stepping through very slowly (with funding from DEC). We're rebuilding the natural drainage system in areas where we have easements, e.g. (with the addition of) riparian wetlands and habitat and, again, flood storage. It has been a slow and difficult process, but it has helped address the flooding issue.

Topic 3: Promoting smart growth and reducing VMTs

Q1. How have you successfully promoted smart growth?

Q2. What are the challenges you face in implementing land use changes and other strategies to reduce VMT?

Q3: What actions should the LULG Panel recommend to support local and regional governments to promote smart growth?

Catherine Morris: Small group discussions included:

- Spoke extensively about EV charging – financing and putting them in
- Would like to focus on managing land use planning, dense and pedestrian friendly to drive down VM

Martha Robertson: Ed Marx instituted a comprehensive plan that expressed a need for nodal development, where the city was the densest area and our traditional villages became nodes. We call them development focus areas now. By articulating that vision, although counties don't have land use and zoning authority, and why it was beneficial to have denser development/walkable areas, it was able to change the

conversation and get local planners thinking in a new way. We followed that up with a water and sewer study that analyzed what was available and how much capacity there was in these villages and the city. (We're) showing that you can considerably densify these areas without adding new water and sewer lines.

We're also proud of our density policy at the industrial development agency, which about 20 years ago, started providing incentives for any development in the City of Ithaca and included commercial and housing projects. (As a result,) we now have housing in the dense urban core that (would not have) happened without that policy. We also have a sales tax agreement that goes back about 30 years. One penny on our sales tax is shared for all of the municipalities outside of the city. So, they don't have to compete for commercial development in order to get sales tax revenue. The development focus areas (concept and practice) has been very successful. We did a housing inventory (and found) that in 2019, that 89% of new housing units were built in those development focus areas, whereas 10 years ago, we were seeing housing development almost entirely on greenfields. We've really been able to encourage that kind of denser development.

A challenge in using land use as a tool for sustainability is that it takes a long time. It's slower than turning a battleship around, but every decision is a 50-year decision. I would add (to this) childcare centers. As we try to recover from this pandemic, we've realized that childcare is basic infrastructure. If childcare centers are located in a walkable neighborhood or near employment, then you're going to save on congestion. Funding drives everything, so if you have the ability to incentivize supporting denser development, like the Downtown Revitalization Initiative or through an IDA, (you'll see that) funding really makes people follow the lead.

I hope that this roundtable will continue as group on its own, but also working with the Land Use Panel and perhaps with other the CLCPA panels. If the state is going to get this whole initiative off the ground, local governments are going to have to be strong partners. The NYSAC (economic development, energy and environment?) committee is very eager to work with the state and all of your panels.

Catherine Morris: I agree. This conversation has been extremely rich and, hopefully, it will continue.

Michael Cashman: We became the first clean energy community within the county, and we divided our award across three different projects. We got a hybrid car, did some LED lighting (projects) and integrated into our \$24 million water capital plan. I'm most proud of (the fact) that we used that funding to advance our smart growth plan for our town center.

The Town of Plattsburgh is the economic hub of the county of 14 towns, 3 villages and the city. We have over a 60-year legacy of planning. We were the first community to do comprehensive land use ... (and have been having conversations about comprehensive land use with) many of our sister municipalities (because they) do not have planners. We've been working with them and a number of them have taken advantage of the CEC (Clean Energy Communities program). Take a look at our plan, Elevate Plattsburgh (www.elevateplattsburgh.com). (It has) an environmental performance section, (where) we identify a number of data points (with help from) NYSERDA.

We've been able to (finally) connect with the Board of Realtors to do a series of workshops (which allows us to reach a group with whom local government sometimes has conflict). Not only are they partnering with us, but we just got a grant with them to further another layer of smart growth at our old county airport. So, if you get people in early, you can do some great things.

Michael Cashman: I'm going to take the opportunity to interject a question from one of the Climate Action Council members, Peter Iwanowicz, that's related to some of the things Michael mentioned. 'How are local government officials dealing with private developers that are still putting in developments that rely on fossil fuels (e.g. natural gas heating infrastructure, as well as, gas stations)?' It sounds like you've reached out to some of them and like it's been pretty successful.

Michael Cashman: It has and that's why I would direct you to that website (where we have) carved out a space for people to see our public outreach and documents. It's not a perfect picture. It's a small north country municipality. But people felt as though we were going to the well. We brought hotels in, gas station owners, supermarkets, the mall, etc. (The mall) was actually the most concerned in the beginning with some of our visioning, and now with the pandemic, they are now like 'oh wow, maybe we might be able to do some different things in our land space'.

Brian Kulpa: The Town of Amherst has a lot of legacy big box which is dying. We have a dead mall, that used to be an Apex mall in the region. It fell into receivership. We took on a land use project and turned it into a zoning project. We put in what we're calling, retrofit districts, (which) allow for development over time to cannibalize some of that land area that is used either by building form or asphalt and turn it back into neighborhood districts. The project was backed by NYSERDA and took about two and half years to complete. Now that we have the retrofit districts in place, there are a number of communities around the country that have started to replicate (this idea).

The retrofit districts allow for mixed use, and demand publicly accessible greenspace to be developed within some those seas of asphalt that we've had. When you retrofit an old big box area with new mixed-use development, you end up with new public infrastructure b/c ultimately you are cutting roads and thoroughfares where there weren't any before. So, we're using portions of funding – some of the tax windfalls created by the investment projects by the private sector – we're capturing those in TIF's (tax increment financing) and using them for green infrastructure build outs. That's allowing us to avoid adding stormwater along those public roads into our storm system.

Boulevard Mall is about a 64-acre site. The process that we've gone through has been pretty well publicized (e.g. in Buffalo News). But we've been able to take a mall that was in receivership, get the receiver/handler excited about getting it back to market and then see a developer purchase it with a quick turnaround. So, it (shows) that land use can be a great tool to create a vision. We put together some action plans regarding that project and developed a shared vision with the developer. It's really been interesting to see how a town can (make) an about face. One of the hardest things to do is to get a development to start to think about new roads and start thinking about cutting up that old legacy big box. But we've been very fortunate to work with our local IDA.

Martha mentioned that childcare centers are mandatory infrastructure. One of the things that we've also identified as necessary infrastructure, especially in some of the poorer areas of town, is access to healthcare (in general) and walkable access to healthcare. One of the difficult things is getting healthcare groups to decide to invest in some of our low-mod (income) census tracts. So, one of the ways that the state can help to create walkable, pedestrian-centered realms would be to lift some of the restrictions on local IDA's in incentivizing health care, and especially if it is in or associated with a low-mod (income) census tract. Because right now, it's treated as retail and there's not much the IDA can do. So, I think understanding that while urgent care (operations) don't need to be incentivized in a lot of our communities, there are communities that they don't want to locate in without some kind of incentive. Giving the IDA the ability to

do that in low-mod income census tracts would allow local government to (treat it) as mandatory infrastructure, so to speak, (and would be as important as) childcare.

Catherine Morris: I'm sure that as we come out of the pandemic, there's going to be more retail space that is going to have to be transitioned into new uses. So that opens up some opportunities like the ones you mentioned.

Steve Noble: I want to add that one of the things that we've done and seem to see happening across the state related to smart growth, is to reorient our community toward their streetscapes and improve our sidewalks and bikeways. We've used a lot of state funding from a variety of sources to start to rebuild our pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure. We think that is one of the key ways to promote smart growth, promote using our inner core areas and reduce the amount of vehicles on the road. So far, that's been working for us.

The state is helping to support initiatives. I hope that would continue, but I want to say that it is very difficult when it comes to trying to prove that putting in sidewalks reduces greenhouse gas emissions. Some of our grant sources require us to provide those types of studies and that really puts a big burden on local municipalities. While it is a proven way to reduce greenhouse gases, it is really hard for a local community to prove it every time they build a new sidewalk or bikeway with state funding. (But,) it is a proven concept and I hope that we can continue to help support it (overall) in NYS.

Evelyn Wright: You really captured my attention with the question about private developers and their attitudes toward fossil vs. renewable (energy) for heating and cooling. This is something that we face a lot and I get one of two reactions when I talk to a developer about this. A quarter of them are early adopters, probably get it and are already working this into their business model. The other three quarters say (sarcastically) 'oh yeah, right, the state has goals, tell me another one.' Here my roots as an economist are showing perhaps, but the number one thing the state can do to help us with this is create some future regulatory certainty about how its going to become more expensive over time to use fossil fuels. (Do this) so that I don't have to try to convince private developers that something they are building now is going to be "uneconomic" for their tenants in 5, 10 or 15 years. If they could just see it in their market calculations, that would change this conversation.

Catherine Morris: Even when it hits the bottom line immediately, it's still a hard argument to make.

Lisa Broughton: We have large communities that are being thrown in with smaller ones, for all kinds of purposes, with NYS. When it comes to fleet, the county's fleet has about 2,000 non-emergency vehicles. When the Climate Smart Communities (program) looks for a 10% reduction, it is a much larger lift for the county to do (as compared to smaller municipalities). I'd like to put that on the record for future grants and climate smart points.

We spoke about EVs (electric vehicles) in our small groups...we struggle to do this and put it through our share program, where the Governor wanted the communities to put their heads together on procurement and other things, we really do need some technical assistance for converting fleet. Our municipalities down here (in Long Island), are 2,000-3,000 in population with many fleet needs. We have made some headway in trying to convert our fleets, but that's an area that we really struggle with. When we talk about public infrastructure for EVs, the fact that it's going to come through our utilities is brilliant. We're thrilled with that and are looking to partner with our utility, LIPA, with placement of those stations that will be built

under the state program. If there isn't already a link between the folks on this call and the utilities who are rolling out EV infrastructure, that is a connection that needs to be made.

Catherine Morris: I saw in the notes that the EV chargers was a topic for all of you. The transportation group is looking at that question as well, so there may be some opportunities to have some input that way too.

Topic 4: What additional recommendations should the panel consider to aid local governments?

Catherine Morris: Asked attendees for final comments and recommendations

Tuona Batchelor: In my work, I'm trying to have a better connection between the economic development world and the climate change world... since one effects the other quite often.

Lisa Broughton: We'd love to share resources with any of the municipalities (on this call) and hopefully get some help from the State.

Cassandra Buell: I've gained a lot of information from this (conversation). I would like to reiterate that a lot of our municipalities struggle with planning technical assistance. We handle planning for the county (and) none of our 28 municipalities have planning departments. Up until a month ago, I was a planning department of 2. So, it's very difficult and any help that we can get from the state would be fantastic. (It would also be helpful if) the programs were easier to apply to and administer. I think there would be (a great deal) more participation (as a result).

Michael Cashman: NYS continues to emphasize the concept of shared services, ... I think ... incentivizing shared services among municipalities that may not think to (work together) could go a long way.

Sage Gerling: (Consider) set(ing) up a mentor program with smaller groups, perhaps (including) the county, the municipalities, and a state rep. It would be nice to have a smaller group to take up our challenges and see where we can find resources.

Brian Kulpa: The greatest thing that we have moving forward in Erie Co. is the shift to walkable (places). It's driven by the university and college campuses. There's a disconnect between SUNY and the municipalities surrounding it. If we want to have integrated environmental approaches then there has to be some breakthroughs between the SUNY system and the municipalities that play host to those schools, and that's hard to come by. We'll continue to work on that here, but there needs to be some systematic changes in Albany (in order to) usher that in.

Hal McCabe: (There's been) a lot of talk about counties and municipalities that have full-time coordinators for this and that, whereas the bulk of the coverage of the state is going to be (in the) small municipalities that are barely able to get thing done, as Cassandra (mentioned). So, figuring out a way to engage (the smaller municipalities) and help them walk through the process (is needed)...the regional planning boards have been fantastic, but I would also say figuring out a way to get the colleges and universities more involved (would be needed). They were integral (in our achievement of the) climate smart bronze status certification, as was assistance from the state. They are a wealth (of information/support). I know it's sometimes difficult to engage with them, but with the right encouragement from a little higher up, they might be more willing.

Steve Noble: The CLCPA has a lot of goals. The state has high ambitions and gives out a lot of resources to municipalities, private entities and non-profits all across the state. Not all of the (projects) have to do with sustainability or environmental related projects. So, I would suggest (requiring) that if you're going to get state aid to build something that you have to do some sort of environmental project as part of your grant. So that we're then starting to see environmental projects pop-up across the state in government, non-profit, commercial and private development, b/c the state has their fingers in so many different places.

Bill Rohr: (The common thread in) all three topic areas that we discussed was the need to deploy resources to the local level – the towns and villages. The problem is that land use planning is inherently complex (and) you can't make that simpler. The administration and application of many of these grants is complex as well, if you can do something to simplify them. I think a lot of effort and resources from the state have to (flow through) the counties to get those resources to the local level. The local capacity is simply not there. Some communities don't get to participate, (while) other communities may (share) in these efforts, but in a very fragmented manner.

Martha Robertson: I would add to the higher education conversation – community colleges. So much of this investment is really a workforce investment issue. Community colleges are a fabulous resource, are able to create new programs and reach deep into communities quite flexibly and quickly. I (hope) that they would be seen as an important resource. They have not been treated particularly well, if you look at SUNY funding and state funding, in general. I hope that instead we will invest in community colleges and look at (them) as a sustainability, workforce and environmental justice issue, as well.

Tim Rogers: We need to help the DOT design engineers get more comfortable with climate change initiatives. We push to make our streets safer for pedestrians and cyclists and it feels like the DOT engineers are handcuffed to traffic volume studies, congestion studies and speed limits that we often feel are too high. We definitely need a great deal of help getting the state agencies all on the same page.

James Ryan: We first became a clean energy community, then a climate smart bronze community (and both) were struggles b/c I had no staff. We (achieved this) primarily with whatever help we could get from other agencies and if it wasn't for that, we wouldn't be here today. In thinking about how we were going to address some of the needs in our community, our approach was (to think of it as), 'if we did this, how much is it going to save me budgetarily so that I can use that money to build upon the next goal?'

We were fortunate enough to get \$50,000 to start through the energy smart community program, (which) we kept using to move forward on other smaller initiatives that got us to climate smart bronze. The state does have to help us with administering these grants. (With regard to) writing the grants...I can hire a grant writer tomorrow, but I need to have an administrator. It's just overwhelming for a staff like (mine). I have two clerks, myself, and it's difficult with a small DPW (Dept. of Public Works) crew. I really do thank you and I have learned a lot from this roundtable today.

Evelyn Wright: This panel has been so informative, and I second the calls to do this in other formats. To build on what Mayor Rogers and Mayor Noble said, the state spends a lot of money on a ton of building projects. (It would be imperative to) find a way to loosen the restrictions that keep us from doing climate smart things (inaudible)...I encourage setting up some kind of formal channel through which localities can communicate about the roadblocks that they are facing to the climate council or whatever agency or office is managing that, so that we aren't just beating our heads against whichever bureaucracy is ...(inaudible). Creating some kind of state mechanism for turning that ...(inaudible) is essential.

Eric Wilson: I'd like to reinforce (the idea of) connecting workforce to climate action. I'm also looking forward to continuing conversations at the regional level. If we're going to pull this off, it's going to be in regional cooperation. So, we're really looking forward to continuing conversation, especially with (the) counties immediately surrounding the city.

Catherine Morris: Thanked everyone for contributing both their successes and challenges.

Sarah Crowell: Brief discussion of next steps (incl. how to stay involved), thanks and wrap-up:

- Thank you for giving time
- Incredibly energized and excited by work ahead
- Consider and incorporate advise
- Want to stay engaged
- Follow up email about how you'd like to stay involved
- Thanks to member of public
- can provide input at panel email

Adjournment