

Solar provider Cypress Creek plans major push into Greene County

By Anthony Fiducia

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Cypress Creek Renewables, LLC, plans to invest \$15 million in community solar farms in Greene County, as part of a larger investment in the greater Hudson Valley.

A nationwide solar-energy provider with a field office in Albany, Cypress Creek plans to target the towns of Greenville, Cairo, Coxsackie, and Catskill.

Along with the Hudson Valley, Cypress Creek is also working throughout the state to deliver renewable energy. The other counties in the Hudson Valley investment are: Orange, Sullivan, Ulster, Albany, Schoharie, and Dutchess.

The \$15 million investment in Greene County is expected to result in seven community solar farm projects creating close to 200 local construction jobs and nearly \$1 million in local tax revenue over the duration of the projects, Cypress Creek Senior Zoning and Outreach Manager John Reagan said.

“We’re working with various property owners and communities to bring community solar farms,” Reagan said. “We’re excited about our work in Greene County.”

Reagan said the solar farm projects would provide clean, renewable, and affordable energy to about 4,500 homes in Greene County.

The solar energy would be shared and sold locally, at rates below current utility prices. Individual buyers would subscribe directly to Cypress Creek Renewables.

Cypress Creek is required to work under community solar rules, which the state holds to rigorous standards, Reagan said.

For instance, community solar farms must only pump out a max size of two megawatts of power. Also, site plans must go under State Environmental Quality Reviews and comply with the various zoning and sighting regulations for each community.

“We work really closely with the towns,” Reagan said. “There’s no air emissions, they don’t consume water, there’s no discharge, they’re very quiet, and they generate clean power locally that is consumed by locals.”

Each solar farm location varies in size based on the properties on which they’re installed.

All of the projects in Greene County are at different stages but none have been approved at this time, Reagan said. The closest approved project in the area is in Kingston.

“We want to improve the access for clean affordable solar to people,” Reagan said. “That way you don’t just need to have the right roof or income to get solar.”

Reagan said solar power is a big part of the state’s mandated Clean Energy Communities Initiative managed by the New York State Energy Research and Development Authority. The initiative is to have 50 percent of the state’s electricity to be renewable by 2030, which was announced by Gov. Andrew Cuomo in August 2016.

On Oct. 12, Cuomo announced that the city of Geneva in Ontario County is the 100th community in New York state to become a clean energy community.

“Communities in every corner of this great state are stepping up to commit themselves to securing a clean future for future generations of New Yorkers,” Cuomo said. “The city of Geneva has made major efforts to reduce energy use while promoting green

alternatives in their community, setting an example for cities and towns across New York.”

Cypress Creek has two project applications under review in Greenville, with two more coming up the rails.

Reagan said the project in Freehold is the farthest along in the process.

Greenville Planning Board Chairman Don Teator said the planning board is trying to go through the process carefully.

“We want to make sure we do our due diligence in the process,” he said. “In the end we want to get a product that’s good for the town and them [Cypress Creek].”

The town of Greenville has certain laws and the board is assessing the impact, asking for details, and trying to figure out what the town wants, Teator said.

“We don’t think we’re being harder or easier — we’re just doing our job,” Teator said.

“We’re building on the experiences other towns have had.”

One big concern for the board is the cumulative impact of the solar farms, Teator said.

The board is considering using the first two proposed solar farms to test those impacts for the other two sites that are awaiting application.

A public hearing for the Greenville community solar farms will be held at Greenville Town Hall on Nov. 1 at 7 p.m.