



# Save the Pine Bush

December/January Newsletter

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## Vegetarian/Vegan Lasagna Dinner Wednesday, December 19, 2018, 6:00 p.m.

### Bill Reinhardt

Albany County Legislator, District 33 and Director, Solarize Albany

### Malcolm Bliss

Founder, Boston Climate Research and Vice President Partnerships, Common Energy  
will speak about

## Going All The Way To Reduce Carbon Emissions: Community Solar, Clean Heating & Cooling

To counter the alarming concentrations of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere, Solarize Albany and Common Energy are working toward goals of “Solar for All” and “Renewable Everything”. A new NYS program called community solar makes clean, low-cost electricity from solar farms available to all households that are connected to the electric grid, with no roof required. At the same time, clean heating and cooling can be achieved using heat pump solutions which will benefit from upcoming NYS programs. **Bring your electricity and heating bills** to this event to learn about the money-saving aspects of Solar for All and Renewable Everything. If you can't attend but would like to learn more or enroll in community solar visit [commonenergy.us/solarize-albany](http://commonenergy.us/solarize-albany) or call 844-899-9763.

**At the Westminster Presbyterian Church, 85 Chestnut Street** (people with cars can park in the lot near the door). All-you-can-eat lasagna dinner, with vegetarian, vegan and gluten-free options, salad, garlic bread and delicious desserts. Only \$12 for adults, \$6 for students, and \$2 for children. People who make reservations are served first. For reservations, please leave a message for Rezsín Adams at 462-0891 or email [pinebush@mac.com](mailto:pinebush@mac.com).

Interested people are welcome to attend the program beginning at 7:00 for no charge.

## Winter Hike or Ski With Claire Nolan

### Saturday, December 29, 2018 at 9:30 AM

Meet at: Pine Bush Discovery Center parking lot, east side of Route 155, opposite Old State Road.  
For GPS - 195 New Karner Road, Albany NY 12205

Leader: Claire Nolan • For More Information: (518) 209-6477

Hike or ski depending on the weather. Our experienced, ever cheerful leader, Claire Nolan, will lead you through a wonderland of sand dunes and pines. Please dress for the weather – if it is above freezing, take precautions for ticks.

The hike is free and open to the public. Bring your friends!

## Strategy & the Story Behind the Albany County Styrofoam Ban

ALBANY, NY: Tina Lieberman spoke at the November SPB dinner. For Tina, this was her first attempt at getting a law passed and she said it took a lot of people. Tina asked people who had helped in some way (writing letters, attending hearings, signing petitions, etc) to stand up and almost everyone in the room had helped!

Tina said Albany County Executive, Dan McCoy, felt the letters to the editor really influenced the legislators. There were thousands of signatures on petitions, many calls, emails and more - all in support of the ban.

Tina helped coordinate the “Styrofoam Free Coalition” of volunteers who worked hard to help the polystyrene ban pass. The coalition had lanyards made with the “Ban The Foam” logo. Supporters wore them to meetings, and even

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## City of Rensselaer Under Trash Assault

### Solid Waste Transfer Facility Proposed on the Banks of the Hudson

*by Tom Ellis*

RENSELAER: More than fifteen area residents met in early November to discuss the proposed Rensselaer Engineered Fuels (REF) facility that has been proposed for the old BASF industrial site just south of downtown Rensselaer. We exchanged information and developed a plan of action. One, who lives a few blocks from the proposed facility, said he had gone door to door and there is much opposition to the project.

This gathering of activists occurred due to concerns about the project and a lack of information about it, fears the Rensselaer city government may not understand the project, and that Rensselaer city officials are trying to slip it through the regulatory process without a full environmental review.

At an August meeting, the Rensselaer planning board, the lead agency, determined the proposed facility would have no significant environmental impact, and issued a negative

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## *Strategy continued from page 1*

legislators in support started wearing them. The coalition also had information on polystyrene (or expanded Polystyrene Foam, EPS) printed to educate people.

“Styrofoam” is actually a trademark for insulation (extruded polystyrene) made for homes by Dow. Dow does not like the fact that the word is being used in a negative way when people are actually referring to polystyrene. Polystyrene never biodegrades in the environment - it just breaks down into smaller and smaller pieces. Polystyrene is a chain of styrene monomers which is stable. Styrene is a toxic substance made from fossil fuels by-products benzene and ethylene. Hot foods placed in styrene are reported to cause styrene to leach into the food. Styrene has also been proven to leach into acidic food, fatty foods and alcohol products. There are significant health concerns including cancer for workers in Styrene production.

Albany County Legislator Chris Higgins attempted to get a Styrofoam ban passed initially. In 2013 a partial success to ban polystyrene was signed into law by the County Executive. This law only applies to chains operating 15 or more stores or restaurants nationwide such as Dunkin Donuts, Cumberland Farms etc. The second attempt to pass a complete ban in March 2017 failed 21-16. Victory happened on the third attempt to pass a ban on polystyrene; the law passed 23-13 on August 13, 2018 and was signed by the County Executive on September 12, 2018. The ban only applies to single use food service packaging like clamshells, cups, bowls and plates.

Tina got involved after the first attempt to pass this law when lobbyists came and convinced the legislature that polystyrene was a good product.

Tina outlined the strategies the volunteers used: First: Do research: The website Massgreen.org was very helpful. Brookline, MA. is one of 20 communities in Massachusetts that had passed bans on styrofoam and plastic bags and its Sierra Club Legislative Chair, Clint Richmond, was a great advisor. Next: Find allies with groups and legislators. Then: Attend public hearings, listen carefully to what the lobbyists are saying. Research facts to refute the lobbyists. Go on to: Gain public support, tabling, petitions, door to door to businesses. From here the volunteers created the Styrofoam Free Directory of 40 + restaurants that have agreed to not use polystyrene in their business (StyrofoamFreeNY.org). Next: Visit legislators and include supporting legislators in conference calls to agree on direction, assign jobs. Solicit people to write letters to the editor. Create Action Alerts to get people to public comment periods; maintain an action alert list to mobilize people quickly

Tina and others needed to figure out who the lobbyists were such as Dart Corporation initially then American Chemistry Council. Know who you are up against!

Lobbyists came in from around the state. The American Chemistry Council represents about 150 chemical, plastic and chlorine businesses. They are a member of ALEC (American Legislative Exchange Council). They provide P.R. for plastics and chemicals companies. They create doubt and confusion such as saying polystyrene can be recycled; the American Chemical Council used this tactic in NYC as well and it is not true or accurate.

The lobbyists historically said they would pay for polystyrene recycling facility, find a market, and said they had companies that wanted it. This was disproved when NYC sent people to see the place where the recycling of polystyrene was supposed to take place. Turns out, recycling was judged not to be economically feasible and minimal polystyrene recycling was happening. The lobbyists had completely fabricated the idea of a robust polystyrene recycling industry.

Other strategies Tina recommended include: show up well prepared, dress neatly and work fast - don't allow the lobbyists time to make their case .

Know talking points and arguments being refuted. Each person that speaks should represent one point so as not to duplicate. It is also helpful to bring props, such as showing what could be used in place of polystyrene that is comparably priced or just a few pennies more.

The night of the vote the lobbyists brought in buses of people in green shirts that said “Packing Team” from the Genpack corporation with large handmade signs urging legislators to reject the ban. Turns out, they were being paid! Carol Waterman discovered this and announced this fact when it was her turn to speak at the hearing.

Tina notes lobbyists always claim economic hardship to refute plastic bans, such as stating that the high cost of polystyrene substitutes will put restaurant owners out of business. Tina even visited business owners that signed forms against a polystyrene ban who did not necessarily understand what they signed.

Take away points: Count the votes! Make a list of legislators and where they stand. Failure is okay. Go back and do more. Work on getting supportive members involved. Always fact check legislators and lobbyists. Build relationships, be prepared and strategic.

Tina went on to suggest alternatives to use for polystyrene, and reminds people never to re-heat food in any plastic whatsoever, as per Dr. David Carpenter former Director of the Wadsworth Center of the NYS Department of Health.

Malcolm Bliss of Community Solar with Danielle of Solarize Albany read a thank you letter from Solarize Albany and Community Solar thanking Tina for her work and gave a donation to the Sierra Club to honor her. Many thanks to Tina and all for her work!

Now that we have had a victory with the ban on food service polystyrene, it's time to start a new campaign to ban single use plastic bags.

Paul Miller, a member of the Albany County Legislature spoke next. Paul demonstrated in a wonderful powerpoint about the importance of banning single-use plastic bags.

There are a trillion plastic bags being used per year, or two million a minute being thrown away. Plastic bags are a fossil fuel product made from polystyrene and do not biodegrade. They litter waterways, environment and landfills. They are a risk to animals from ingestion, nest building and entanglement leading to poisoning, choking, blocked ingestion and death. Humans risk ingesting micro-plastics and leached toxins through contamination of our food and water supply . They adversely affect agriculture, public health and water treatment.

Paul informed us there is now one pound of plastic for every three pounds of fish and by 2050 there will be more plastic than fish by weight. Every minute, one garbage truck of plastic is dumped in our oceans. The UN has declared plastic a “planetary crisis”. Plastic has been found in dead birds’ stomachs. Cigarette filters that are made of plastic litter our waterways as well and are dangerous to animals .

Paul points out so much packaging is single-use now; unlike years ago when packages could be refilled or reusable such as milk bottles. Paul wonders if Stewarts would go back to reusables; they were one of the last to stop using glass bottles (some farms still do and this is available at some co-ops like Honest Weight). Paper bags and boxes are better. We should encourage stores to use paper, cardboard and reusable bags by providing these to customers instead of plastic. It is important to cut up plastic six pack rings as animals get caught in them. Paul reports the U.S. is lagging behind the rest of the world; California banned plastic bags in 2014 and taxed paper bags. NYS used 23 billion bags in 2017.

Paul suggests that Albany County lead the way to ban single-use plastic bags — who would like to help?

Goals for proposed legislation: Reduce pollution, reduce waste management costs, improve public health, carbon reduction, require recycle bins in grocery stores. Plastic bags can not be put into recycle bins; place a fee on bags and replace with reusable bags.

For more information please email Tina Lieberman at [tlieberm1@gmail.com](mailto:tlieberm1@gmail.com).

## New York Must Commit to 100% Clean Energy by 2030 – a Green New Deal

by Mark Dunlea

The United Nations last month announced that we have 12 years left for an emergency worldwide mobilization – unprecedented in human history – to halt the use of fossil fuels and eliminate greenhouse gas emissions.

Failure to take such dramatic action increases the likelihood that human civilization as we presently know it will cease to exist. Floods, sea level rise, wildfires, heat waves and droughts will make parts of the planet uninhabitable. Climate refugees will likely be in the hundreds of millions. Support systems involving energy, food and water will break down, leading to wars over such resources. Hundreds of millions, if not billions, could die.

There is no indication that Governor Cuomo or state lawmakers take this threat seriously or that they are prepared to launch the needed effort. Climate change was ignored by Cuomo and most lawmakers in the recent election. It also continues to be largely ignored by the media.

New York's progress on meeting climate goals has been pitifully small. 16 years and three Governors after Pataki set some modest goals for renewable energy, New York has only added 4% of the state's electricity coming from solar and wind.

We need New York to provide national leadership by enacting the strongest climate change agenda possible. That is the Off Fossil Fuels act, which would immediately halt all new fossil fuel infrastructure, transition to 100% clean renewable energy by 2030 (i.e., net zero greenhouse gas emissions), and require all new buildings to be at least net zero carbon emissions. (California has enacted the latter requirement while also requiring new homes to be solar powered.)

The Act act not only requires the state to adopt an enforceable climate action plan with clear timelines and benchmarks, but for counties and local governments above 50,000 to do so as well.

The State also needs to take the simple but symbolic step of divesting its state pension fund from billions in fossil fuel investments as NYC recently agreed to do. A state carbon tax on polluters would help accelerate and pay for the transition to renewables.

The Democrats and their closely aligned community organizations are poised to enact the Community and Climate Protection Act (CCPA), a version of which has passed the Assembly since 2009. It builds upon an Executive Order issued by Governor Paterson. At least through 2030, the CCPA largely seeks to put into law the Governor's existing climate goals rather than improve them. It does however adopt important environmental justice and Just Transition goals.

It continues the traditional strategy of taking incremental steps that are seen as politically practical – rather than doing what is necessary to save life on the planet. It does not even call for the state to halt the development of fossil fuel infrastructure.

We witnessed a similar scenario eight years ago, when the Green Party picked up the call by grassroots activists to ban fracking of natural gas. The larger green groups dismissed a ban as imprudent, instead calling for a moratorium to study the issue. Fortunately, the grassroots had the numbers and the passion and eventually prevailed, with the big groups changing their position.

One of the great things about taking climate action is that it has major positive impacts on jobs, health and electric bills – in addition to saving life on the planet. The only downside is for the fossil fuel companies – unless they move into renewable energy, efficiency or energy storage, as their own scientists urged them to do thirty years ago.

The NY Times Magazine recently devoted its entire Sunday edition to the proposition that life on the planet is doomed since we lacked the political leadership to take action to stand up to the fossil fuel companies. The NY Times may say game over but we say game on. We need average New Yorkers to step up and create that political will.

Pope Francis was correct when in his climate treatise he said we could not solve climate change unless we also solved injustice, since it is the same mentality that allows the wealthy to exploit the poor that drives humanity to exploit the planet. We need to change our political and economic system, our values, to focus on meeting the needs of all not just enrich the wealthy.

We need to reject capitalism and adopt eco-socialism. Continuing to allow the private sector and their focus on maximizing profits to determine our energy future will never solve the climate crisis.

For the last eight years we have campaigned for a Green New Deal to transform our energy systems while providing millions of new living wage jobs and eliminating the air pollution that kills millions worldwide.

The Green New Deal has received increased attention in the last year. It made national headlines recently when hundreds of climate activists with the Sunrise Movement held a sit-in in Cong. Nancy Pelosi's office. Draft legislation by incoming Congress Member Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez calls for a ten-year transition to 100% clean power, with an accompanying committed

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## Letters to the Editor of the Times Union

Compiled by Tim Truscott

### Letter: Pine Bush Preserve remains a folly

To the editor, Sunday, September 2, 2018

The extension of the lifespan of the Rapp Road landfill is welcome news for Albany taxpayers. It's unimaginable what the cost of getting rid of our waste will be when we have to close that landfill. I am surprised that a waste-to-energy facility has not been proposed or an end brought to this folly with the Pine Bush Preserve.

Enough is enough with this reserving of land that has no purpose. The city of Albany could use the land for housing and commercial use and continue to have a waste disposal site instead of vacant land that has become an eyesore. If needed, a butterfly sanctuary could be built on a small section of land. The money set aside for the supervision of the Pine Bush Preserve could go to help keep the city solvent. This proposal is not so farfetched as it may seem. It would only take our state Assembly members and Senators to take the first step to relieve the taxpayers of Albany from the much higher taxation that would occur if Albany goes into bankruptcy.

*Albert Paolucci, Albany*

### Letter: Pine Bush not the folly; landfill expansion is

To the editor, Saturday, September 8, 2018

I read with amazement the letter from Albert Paolucci that suggests dismantling the Pine Bush Preserve and expanding the landfill ("Pine Bush Preserve remains a folly," Sept. 2). It seems he is not joking but entirely serious.

Does he know how hard some dedicated people worked to save the small scrap of pine bush that we still have? Now he says their farsighted vision of preserving a piece of this unique ecosystem is just a "folly." He would have us continue our wasteful lifestyle, whatever the cost, to avoid the inconvenience of making any changes. In a weird contradiction, he would set aside an even smaller area to save the Karner Blue butterfly, but not the ecosystem itself.

There are many things we can do. How about taking reusable shopping bags into every store not just the grocery store? Or never, ever buying another bottle of water, when we have the nation's best water here in the Northeast, ready to fill our reusable water bottles from the tap? Or backyard composting, which can accept not just food waste but also our shredded office paper and grass clippings and turn them into productive garden soil? To really think outside the box and start something new, how about taking our own reusable takeout containers when we go out to dinner?

The old maxim of "reduce, re-use, recycle" still holds, and there are always new and  
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declaration, which means that no environmental impact statement (EIS) will be required.

A full EIS is required due to the large size, scope, duration, and that the waste processing facility would be located atop a hazardous waste site in the Hudson River flood plain.

NYS Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) regulations state that "Type I actions meet or exceed thresholds listed in the statewide or agency SEQR regulations. These are likely to require preparation of an EIS. Some examples: nonresidential projects physically altering 10 or more acres of land." The REF, which has several other names, would occupy more than twenty acres.

After meeting with city planning director in mid-November, Judith Enck reported "It was described by the developer as a composting project, but IT IS NOT COMPOSTING. It is essentially a large solid waste transfer station, sited on the banks of the Hudson River, which will dry and "process" solid waste and then truck it an unidentified cement kiln in Pennsylvania where it would be burned. They are seeking approval to bring 150,000 tons of solid waste each year, using Route 9J from the south. No limit on number of trucks. They will need various NY DEC permits. City of Rensselaer has already approved and did not require an Environmental Impact Statement. 30 new jobs would be created on a 40 acre site that will be leased for 99 years from BASF. It is on a floodplain. They run a similar facility in West Virginia and have a similar facility proposed for New Windsor, in Orange County, NY."

I spoke at the October 3, 2018 meeting of the Rensselaer city council, and told the council that a full environmental impact study is required, urged the city to rescind the negative declaration, issue a positive declaration, and mandate

the preparation of an EIS. On November 15, I emailed DEC Commissioner Basil Seggos, urging him "as DEC commissioner, [to] instruct the city of Rensselaer that DEC requires that an EIS be prepared."

Many Rensselaer city residents have a poor perception of DEC and Rensselaer city government due to the largest construction and demolition (C&D) dump in NYS that DEC and the city permit to operate despite its close proximity to a school, regulatory violations at the dump, overweight trucks, and the up to 100 large trucks travel through downtown Rensselaer each weekday to and from the dump at the east end of Partition Street.

I think the Rensselaer city government miscalculated badly when they agreed to host the solid waste facility at the old BASF site at the same time there is growing opposition to the C&D dump. The two issues may become fused together into the larger issue that Rensselaer is under a trash assault and the Rensselaer city government does not care about the health and safety of its residents. DEC will also miscalculate if it allows the project to proceed without an EIS.

**A Green New Deal continued from page 3**

to environmental and economic justice and public ownership and democratic control of our energy system. We must push Governor Cuomo to make New York a true climate leader.

*Mark Dunlea is the former Green Party candidate for State Comptroller and the chair of the Green Education and Legal Fund.*

**Letters to the Editor continued from page 3**

imaginative ways to apply it. But expanding the landfill is a shortsighted answer. When that expansion is full, where do we find the next one?

*Worth Gretter, Menands*

**Letter: Preserve balances nature, economy**

To the editor, September 24, 2018 I disagree with Albert Paolucci's letter, "Pine Bush Preserve remains a folly," Sept. 2.

Paolucci suggests solving Albany's landfill problems by expanding into the Pine Bush Preserve. He believes the Pine Bush Preserve is a drain on taxpayers and looks to more home and commercial building. The most troublesome quote from Paolucci was "Enough is enough with this reserving land that has no purpose." The author implies that green space has no purpose, but I would disagree.

Green spaces preserve the natural hydrology and water balance of the area, promote filtration of rainwater and the Pine Bush preserves Albany's natural character and habitat. It also provides numerous recreational opportunities that keep the area desirable and maintain home prices. Currently, we have a landfill welcome mat on Exit 24. Personally, I believe we don't need a Garbage Shrine in the center of our city.

Mayor Kathy Sheehan proposes a transfer station at Rapp Road to facilitate the movement of garbage to a new landfill or incinerator. The lack of a plan can potentially bankrupt the city and solutions come at a cost, a cost to move garbage and the lost tipping fees as revenue. Albany residents need to be responsible for what they put out on the curb and remember that waste generated equals dollars spent.

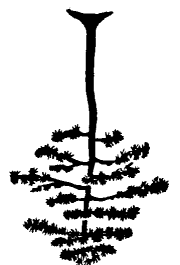
The city has options; one option is incineration. Hudson Falls and Peekskill have operating municipal waste incinerators with energy recovery. We must continue to reduce trash and reduce the amount of plastics that would go to an incinerator.

Expanding into the Pine Bush is not a realistic solution for those planning on spending a lifetime in the Capital Region.

*Steven De Santis, Guilderland*

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