WNYEA Energy & Climate Working Group Meeting Recap

In November of 2012, the Western New York Environmental Alliance (WNYEA) presented its 2013 Action Agenda. The agenda contains 10 planks from 7 of the Alliance’s Working Groups, all dealing with environmental issues impacting the Western New York Region. To learn more about the Action Agenda items of the WNYEA and their progress, get involved in the Alliance through the Working/Process Group Meetings, signing up for a listserv, or visiting the WNYEA section on GrowWNY. Or continue reading to learn about the latest Energy & Climate meeting.

On July 11, 2013, the Energy & Climate Working Group held a meeting. The key focuses of this meeting were:

- Out of town investors interested in the WNYEA
- Climate Smart Communities
- The FIT Policy

The meeting began with Bob Knoer giving a brief overview of the application of advocacy to the WNYEA. He stressed the importance of reaching out to member organizations and encouraging them to become more involved with developing planks of action for the WNYEA. In addition, Mr. Knoer explained where to find more information (link) on advocacy policies on the GrowWNY website.

Next, Cara Matteliano brought up how the Community Foundation for Greater Buffalo had been entertaining possible investors from out of town who are interested in Buffalo. According to her, the investors are interested in social enterprise and the CFGB’s focus areas; and possibly even job training for low income people. Cara expressed that ideas are needed for where the investments could go so that a sustainable return could be achieved. One of the ideas was to set up a loan fund for creating energy efficient homes and buildings at a low interest rate. The loan could possibly provide capital for energy efficiency in much larger scale projects as well. Furthermore, it was suggested that the money could be loaned to a solar panel production company. This way, the return would be the increased production and use of solar panels throughout the Buffalo area.

Following this topic, the Climate Smart Communities action was discussed with regard to the County’s decision to submit at least two grant proposals as part of the regional sustainability plan. One would be funding to assist communities in Erie County to become climate smart, while the other would allow the County to assemble its own green team and do a county wide inventory. The County is hoping to gain the support of the WNYEA and its member organizations.

Lastly, the FIT (Feed-in-Tariffs) policy was mentioned as being a good opportunity to discuss its implementation throughout Western New York with its policy leaders. The Energy & Climate group also wants to make a commitment to the future reduction of fossil fuel use. Although it may not be concrete, it at least provides impetus to change since a long term renewable energy policy is needed.
Do you have feedback or suggestions for this group? Tell us in the comment section below, or come to the next meeting on Thursday, August 8th, 2013 at 4:00 pm at the Community Foundation for Greater Buffalo Offices at the Larkin at Exchange, Suite 525, 726 Exchange St., Buffalo, NY 14210.