

For immediate release

Contact:

Manna Jo Greene, mannajo@aol.com, 845-807-1270

Susan H. Gillespie, susan.h.gillespie@gmail.com, 834-658-9820

The renewal of the federal tax credit for solar installations is making large-scale solar arrays more affordable – and leading to questionable offers by companies blanketing upstate New York with offers of solar leases. Farmers and other large landowners are being offered seemingly lucrative long-term leases (as much as \$1,000 - \$2,000 per acre per year), with terms that run the risk of stripping landowners of virtually all their property rights as well as leading to the loss of agricultural or forestry exemptions. Thomas Jackson, Director of the Ulster County Real Property Tax Service Agency, reports that there are currently 4,859 taxable properties of 20 acres or more in Ulster County – not including land owned by state, city or utilities.

On Monday, April 4, the Ulster County Climate Smart Committee, Cornell Cooperative Extension of Ulster County, and Citizens for Local Power will hold a public forum in Rosendale to address these issues. “Scaling up Solar: Exercising Caution with Large-Scale Solar Leases to Protect Area Farmers and Other Large Landowners” will include detailed information on the leases from attorneys and tax assessors, and discussion of zoning for solar and of new opportunities for solar development that can have a positive impact on communities. The forum will take place from 7-9 p.m. at the Rosendale Recreation Center, 1055 Route 32, Rosendale, NY 12472. The event is free and open to public. Reservations are suggested: www.surveymonkey.com/r/solarleases

Participants include Jen Metzger, Rosendale town councilwoman and co-director of Citizens for Local Power; Steve Mogul, an attorney from Sullivan County with experience in solar leasing issues; David Church AICP, Commissioner of Planning, Orange County, and Meister Consulting; Thomas Jackson, Director of Ulster County Real Property Tax Service Agency and Michael Dunham, Assessor, Towns of Rosendale, Marbletown and Rochester; and Susan H. Gillespie, President of the Board, Citizens for Local Power, on community solar. The presentations will be followed by a Q&A with all presenters, plus Dick Riseling of Sullivan Alliance for Sustainable Development. Manna Jo Greene, Chairman of Ulster County Climate Smart Committee, will moderate.

Both the NY State Public Service Commission's emphasis on Distributed Renewable Generation ("DRG") and Governor Cuomo's goal of 50% renewable energy generation by 2030 ("50 by 30") strongly support the transition to a Green Energy Economy. Legislator Greene, who helped coordinate this event, expressed concern that "no one should be harmed in the process – especially not area farmers, who contribute so much to our region's beauty and food security. The installation of solar and other renewable energy infrastructure must be appropriate and beneficial to all who participate." "This program is very important for the farm community, and the Rondout Valley Growers Association is pleased to be a co-sponsor," said RVGA executive director Deborah DeWan. "Growers need to know the details and learn about the potential impacts of these proposed solar leases on farm businesses and agricultural exemptions so they can make informed decisions."

Co-sponsors include Catskill Mountainkeeper, Hudson Valley Regional Council Sustainability Committee Energy Working Group, Orange County Planning Department, Rondout Valley Growers Association, Sustainable Hudson Valley, Town of Rosendale, Ulster County Planning Department, Ulster County Real Property Tax Service Agency, and the Ulster County Association of Town Supervisors and Mayors.

Calendar Listing for Upcoming Solar Events:

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Tuesday, March 22, 7:00 - 9:15 p.m. ZONING FOR SOLAR WORKSHOP at SUNY/Ulster, Vanderlyn Hall, Stone Ridge, NY 12484 <https://training.ny-sun.ny.gov/training-quick/courses-workshop-descriptions#zoning-for-solar-energy>

Monday, April 4, 7 - 9 p.m. EXERCISING CAUTION WITH LARGE-SCALE SOLAR LEASES. While it is urgent and important to install renewables as the backbone to the emerging green energy economy, large landowners are being offered seemingly lucrative long-term leases (as much as \$1,000 - \$2,000 per acre per year), but which run the risk of stripping landowners of virtually all their property rights. This forum, sponsored by the Ulster County Climate Smart Committee, Cornell Cooperative Extension of Ulster County, Citizens for Local Power and many others, features attorneys, assessors, and other resource people, who can advise farmers and other large landowners how to protect themselves – and what alternatives are available if they chose to develop large-scale solar on their property. This event, which will be held at the Rosendale Community Center, 1055 Rt. 32, Rosendale, NY 12472, is free and open to the public. For further information please contact: mannajo@aol.com or susan.h.gillespie@gmail.com .

Sunday, April 10, 3 pm - 6 pm. BEYOND ROOFTOPS – EXPANDING SOLAR ENERGY IN OUR COMMUNITIES. Mohonk Mountain House Parlor, New Paltz NY. Public Forum. Advance registration required: \$25/Regular; \$10/Student. Contact Patty Matteson at Mohonkconsultations@hvi.net or register at www.mohonk-consultations.org/Programs.