

22. Evening Hearings and Access

Evening Hearings

The following individuals and organizations in their comments suggested that hearings be held in the evening:

New York Public Interest Research Group
Chenango North Energy Awareness Group
Green Party
New York State Environmental Justice Alliance
Babylon Greens, Town of Babylon
Ann Link
Sierra Club, NYC Group
UPROSE

Marah Hall

I would like to commend the Energy Planning Board for having so many hearings. I do hope that in the future at least one of the hearings will be held at a time that is a little more accessible to a majority of New York's working public.

Response: While the legislation governing the State Energy Plan calls for three public hearings, nine were held at various sites across New York State to permit the widest possible response to the Draft State Energy Plan. No hearings on previous State Energy Plans were held in the evening. The Energy Planning Board is sensitive to the value of such sessions. One major problem associated with holding hearings in the evening concerns security for the panel and for the attendees. The Energy Planning Board will consider this issue in preparing for future public hearings on the State Energy Plan and other public planning documents.

Access – Libraries

Green Party

Copies of the draft State Energy Plan should be more widely distributed to the public by sending copies to New York's libraries.

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Response: Copies of the draft State Energy Plan were sent to 1300 New York libraries in early January 2002, and copies of the State Energy Plan will be distributed to the same mailing list shortly after it is approved by the Energy Planning Board.

Publicize Better – Importance of Publicity

Riverkeeper, Inc.

The Energy Planning Board should involve the public to the greatest extent possible. However, with regard to the public process, there have been a number of glaring inadequacies. Indeed, it appears fairly obvious that the Energy Planning Board is either disinterested in public comment on the State Energy Plan or is actively discouraging public input.

For example, when the draft State Energy Plan was released in December 2001, we were informed that the Energy Planning Board had produced only enough copies of the plan to distribute to the few members of the public that had participated in the scoping process. Other interested citizens and groups were told they had to download and print the more than 300 page long document from the NYSERDA web site. Further, the Energy Planning Board's technical briefing and nine public hearings were scheduled at either 9:00 AM and 1:00 PM or 10:00 AM and 2:00 PM on weekdays. As a result, the vast majority of the general public were unable to attend because of conflicting employment obligations. Such timing, of course, presents no barriers to energy industry representatives. Speakers were limited to five minutes each. No hearings were held in the Hudson Valley, although that region bears a disproportionate burden in terms of existing power plants and new facility proposals.

As a result, New York State Sustainable Energy Campaign organized the People's Energy Forum for the evening of March 14, 2002 in Rockland County. It is particularly telling that ordinary citizens have had to take it upon themselves to organize a public hearing which was incumbent on the Energy Planning Board to hold.

Response: As noted elsewhere, the Energy Planning Board held nine public hearings rather than the three that are called for in the legislation governing the State Energy Plan. The Energy Planning Board made every effort to ensure reasonable access by all the citizens of New York. Two hearings were held in Manhattan and Brooklyn, which were accessible by public transportation and within easy driving distance of most sites in Westchester County. Evening hearings will be considered by the Energy Planning Board for future State Energy Plans and other public planning documents. Speakers were

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allotted ten minutes each and in numerous instances were allowed to make additional comments as time permitted. Also, an extensive period was available for submission of written comments, which were not limited in size. Over 2,350 copies of the draft State Energy Plan were distributed to interested parties and to individuals upon request. Another 1,300 were distributed to public libraries across New York State. Extensive public outreach was conducted throughout development of the draft and State Energy Plans, as described in Section 1.1 of the State Energy Plan.

Timothy McCorry

The meeting was not well attended by residents. Other, more well-attended meetings, were better publicized and held in the evening.

Babylon Greens, Town of Babylon

I just happened to get this [notice about the hearings] because I get certain emails from the State Green Party. I haven't seen anything about this on the Island.

Pat DeAngelis

I can't stress enough the fact that we need to have been information going out to people about hearings.

Green Party

It is clear that the State needs to assume greater leadership in bringing New Yorkers into the decisions made about our energy sources.

Energy decisions should not be made by fast-track decisions as stated in the intro of the Draft State Energy Plan. These decisions should be thoroughly thought through and must include public comment opportunities at all levels of decision making.

Response: The Energy Planning Board's goal is to obtain the widest input from organizations and individuals across the State. While some of the publication processes are mandated by regulations and legislation, other are undertaken in the spirit of inclusion. The following steps were undertaken by the Board in publicizing the State Energy Plan:

A Notice was published in the *New York State Register* on December 26, 2001.

The draft State Energy Plan were posted the web sites of all the Energy Planning Board member agencies.

More than 2,350 copies of the draft State Energy Plan were distributed with the Notice of Technical Briefing and Hearings.

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A press release was issued on December 11, 2001.

A Public Notice of Planning Proceeding appeared in the *New York State Register* on April 18, 2001.

Media advisories and press releases were distributed for each hearing locale in advance of the hearings.

Copies of the draft State Energy Plan were sent to 1300 New York libraries in early January 2002.

In addition, the Energy Planning Board agencies' staff participated in a two and one-half hour live television broadcast "Peoples Forum on Energy" held at the Ramapo Town Hall to discuss and receive comment on the draft State Energy Plan.

Hold in Westchester County

Westchester County Board

Perhaps for the next State Energy Plan, you might consider Westchester County. Obviously it has critical energy needs as much as the entire State does, and it would provide an opportunity for some Westchester residents to comment directly.

Dani Glaser

I also respectfully request that a meeting such as this be held in Westchester County. We are home to Indian Point nuclear power plant. We are home of the proposed Millennium pipeline project and home of many other energy projects and infrastructures, and the residents of Westchester deserve to have their own forum.

Green Party, New York

I do feel there is an unfortunate oversight that you did not include Westchester County in placing these hearings. There are a lot of people in Westchester County that would have like to have had a hearing in our neighborhood.

Response: The Energy Planning Board held nine public hearings rather than the three that are called for in the legislation governing the State Energy Plan and made every effort to ensure reasonable access by all the citizens of New York. Two hearings were held in Manhattan and Brooklyn which were accessible by public transportation and within easy driving distance of most sites in Westchester County, and the Energy Planning Board agencies' staff participated in a two and one-half hour live television broadcast "People's Forum on Energy" held at the Ramapo Town Hall to discuss and receive comment on the draft State Energy Plan.

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