

The Westfield Republican

"First Republican Newspaper Printed in U. S. A."
Also serving the communities of Chautauqua and Mayville since 1856

Volume 189, Number 9

THURSDAY, JUNE 25, 2020

Westfield, New York

Price 75¢

Sherman village board looks to lease land for solar array project

By David Prenatt

editorial@westfieldrepublican.com

SHERMAN — Members of the Sherman Village Board took the first step toward leasing 20 acres of land near the wastewater treatment plant to Solar Liberty for the installation of a 6.5 megawatt array.

At their recent meeting, trustees passed a resolution authorizing Mayor Colleen Meeder to sign Appendix J with Solar Liberty to begin the Coordinated Electric System Interconnection Review by National Grid.

Meeder told the board that the village is under contract with Solar Liberty at the wastewater treatment property. "Solar Liberty is investigating the opportunity to update and expand the current system," she said.

Should the village lease 20 acres of land to Solar Liberty for 25 years, for \$1,200 an acre, that would provide \$24,000 annually in income, Meeder said.

The agreement would provide additional benefits to the village and to residents. There would be a community credit payment,

as well as community solar discounts to the village and town of Sherman, including municipal, residential and commercial meters.

Rob Gauchet of Solar Liberty gave the board a brief overview of his company, then answered questions. He said Solar Liberty was founded in 2003 by Adam and Nathan Rizzo, and it is headquartered in Buffalo.

"We design and engineer the array, come to an agreement with National Grid, do all permits and environmental reviews,"

Gauchet said. "We are in the midst of connecting a lot of these arrays throughout New York state, many of them in Chautauqua County."

The municipal solar energy systems that Solar Liberty installs on leased land "demonstrate innovation, cost consciousness, and leadership in a new economy. Positive community support and measurable cost savings make solar panel installations the right choice for municipalities," he noted.

In response to questions

about what occurs when the 25 year lease is over, Gauchet told trustees that when the project reaches its life cycle end, everything is removed and the property is returned to a pristine state. "Everything is removable," Gauchet said.

Meeder asked Gauchet to address the matter of visual screening. He said the company has done mounds and tree cover to create a screen and, thereby, making sure the array is not considered an eyesore.

Meeder told the board

that the neighboring community of South Ripley will soon have an array that covers 2,000 acres. "Ours will be very small compared to the one in South Ripley," she said.

Meeder also noted that federal tax credits of 26% for the first year, 22% for the second year and 10% for the third year, along with NYSERDA incentives will benefit the village. Furthermore, she said, "We have to consider the opportunity we have for the sewer plant, which had a large utility bill."