



# Save the Pine Bush

December/January Newsletter

Dec 17/Jan 18 No. 139 • 33 Central Ave., Albany, NY 12210 • email [pinebush@mac.com](mailto:pinebush@mac.com) • phone 518-462-0891 • web <http://www.savethepinebush.org> • Circ. 625

## Vegetarian/Vegan Lasagna Dinner Wednesday, December 20, 2017, 6:00 p.m. Three Experiences of Standing Rock

Iris Marie Bloom, executive director of Protecting Our Waters,  
Ariel Gatto, musician and spoken word artist  
Sharon Alley, founder of Equine Dimension

Many environmental and indigenous rights workers travelled to Standing Rock to help, show solidarity, and join in the strongest international statement of indigenous solidarity and resistance to fossil fuel infrastructure of our time. One of our speakers, Sharon Alley, tells of the elders asking that everyone take coals from the sacred fire home with them in their hearts and kindle more fires where water protectors can gather. Join in kindling more fires and come hear the stories of Iris, Ariel and Sharon, three people who went to Standing Rock and were profoundly moved by the experience.

**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 and vegan 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 Rezsine 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 which there is no charge.

## Save the Pine Bush Winter Holiday Season Outing Saturday December 16, 2017 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: 518-465-8930

Hike or ski depending on ever increasing, and unpredictable vagaries and uncertainties of weather and climate change. Increased winds are a common denominator of climate change so wear a windbreaker, and also some legwear to protect against ticks which still abound. Our experienced, ever cheerful leader, Claire Nolan, will lead you through a wonderland of sand dunes and pines which, if you wish be considered as Tannenbaumen (or Christmas trees). Claire is well known as a cyclist, cross-country skier and very much as a professional and accomplished story teller. Claire's highly contagious sense of wonders is fully found in her marvelous manner of story telling. I can't say but if you are lucky you may get treated to an extremely enjoyable and spellbinding tale along the trail.

Please wear appropriate protective clothing for the danger of ticks, bring deet or insect repellent to use before beginning the walk or ski.

## SHARE Opposes the Microgrid Fossil Fuel Plant in Sheridan Hollow

*Sheridan Hollow Alliance for Renewable  
Energy (SHARE) Describes the  
Environmental and Health Hazards*

*by Tom Ellis*

ALBANY, NY: A panel that included Albany County legislator Merton Simpson spoke in opposition to the proposed Sheridan Hollow Microgrid Fossil Fuel Plant at the October 18 Save the Pine Bush dinner. About 45 attended. Also speaking were engineer Keith Schue and environmental health advocate, Rita Ogburn-McCall. Sandy Steubing moderated the discussion.

Sandy said the New York Power Authority (NYPA), the state-owned electric utility, had, moments earlier, notified her that it would not participate in a previously scheduled meeting the next day, with the Sheridan Hollow Alliance for Renewable Energy (SHARE), to discuss the microgrid project.

Merton Simpson said SHARE had formed

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## Geothermal Power is Possible in the City

*by Tom Ellis*

ALBANY, NY — "The future is bright," said John Ciovacco, President of Aztech Geothermal, at the November 15 SPB dinner. He spoke about "Geothermal Heat Pump Systems as One solution to Climate Change."

Aztech was founded in 2007, the first installations were in 2009, and 350 installations have now been completed. Mr. Ciovacco used a PowerPoint and was accompanied by two of his workers. He said geothermal power has many names including geothermal heat pumps and "utility geothermal is not what we do."

Geothermal uses the near constant heat trapped underground to heat buildings in winter and cool them in summer. (The heat or thermal energy is derived indirectly from the sun shining

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only two months earlier and already had more than 100 groups and elected officials in its coalition who oppose the project at 79 Sheridan Avenue in Albany. He said he believed family members contracted cancer and experienced premature deaths from the ANSWERS trash incinerator that operated from 1982 through 1994 at the same address the microgrid facility would be.

Mr. Simpson said he has been an activist since 1968 and co-chaired, with Vera Michelson, the Coalition Against Apartheid and Racism. He insisted that Governor Andrew Cuomo “will not be able to ignore” us and our coalition. He called the microgrid project is an “existential threat” and “the fact that this is being proposed in a neighborhood heavily and negatively impacted” by the ANSWERS incinerator “shows us who we are up against.” He said, “We do not want to be poisoned a little less” and “there is no such thing as a good cigarette or good fossil fuel.”

Keith Schue said he moved to New York from Florida seven years ago. The state’s proposal is a Combined

Heat and Power (CHP) “Co-generation” and Microgrid. Sixteen megawatts (one megawatt equals one million watts) of electricity would be generated from two natural gas-fired turbines to provide ninety percent of the power for the Empire State Plaza (ESP) and nearby buildings for the next thirty years. It would be fracked gas, he said. The equipment would include two 11,000 horsepower turbines, the same equipment used in compressor stations. As proposed, exhaust heat from the turbines would also supplement steam production from the existing steam plant.

Compressor stations, he said, use gas-fired turbines to operate compressors that pump natural gas through a pipeline. For the proposed microgrid, those same gas-fired turbines would power electricity generators. Both have the same emissions, he said. However, most compressor stations are in rural areas; the gas turbines for this microgrid would be in downtown Albany, impacting many more people. He said the proposal calls for two smokestacks that would be only fifteen feet above the roof of the old ANSWERS plant, lower than the existing smokestack. Such low stacks would easily spread emissions into the immediate neighborhood.

Mr. Schue said NYPA is insisting the electricity for the project must be generated in the

immediate vicinity of the Empire State Plaza, ignoring the fact that the natural gas that would power the project would come from more than 100 miles away in Pennsylvania. Keith insisted there is no reason why the electricity for the ESP must be exclusively generated in the same neighborhood as the ESP.

He said NYPA insists that geothermal is not practical in cities even though examples exist of buildings in urban areas that use it, including St. Patrick’s Cathedral in NYC and the Colorado state capitol building in Denver.

If this proposal goes on line, he said Governor Cuomo will be setting a bad example for the future. It would be “an admission of defeat” from Mr. Cuomo concerning the state’s renewable energy and greenhouse gas reduction goals that he often touts. Mr. Schue asked, “What does this say about the state that “banned” fracking if New York’s vision for the future of its own capital is fracked gas?”

*“There is no such thing as a  
good cigarette or good fossil fuel.”  
The Honorable Merton Simpson, 10-18-17*

Finishing up his presentation, he said “New York must not surrender to a future of fossil fuels” and New York’s decision makers are falsely asserting that renewable energy is not a feasible way to power downtown Albany government buildings.

Rita Ogburn-McCall said the ANSWERS incinerator was closed in 1994, three years ahead of schedule. She said there are five major chemical emissions from natural gas facilities, one being particulate matter. She said natural gas installations release emissions throughout the process, continuously, and in fluctuating quantities. She said a person could suddenly have an asthma attack on a peak emission day.

She said still births and prenatal deaths occurred in the Sheridan Hollow neighborhood due to the ANSWERS incinerator.

Federal and state laws, she said, are designed to protect the general population and not the most vulnerable individuals such as pregnant women, asthmatics, children and infants, the elderly, people with COPD, or people with hypertension. Nor are the combined impacts of several different chemical exposures analyzed, she said.

Ms. Ogburn-McCall finished her presentation saying, “We must become citizen

scientists.”

During the Q&A, Lynne Jackson asked if it would be possible to construct wind turbines and solar installations on the property [363 acres] the City of Albany owns in the Town of Coeymans, as suggested by Albany Common Councilman Frank Commisso, Jr. A woman asked about the feasibility of an energy retrofit of the ESP and NYS Capitol Building to which Keith responded that some ESP energy efficiencies have been made since the ESP opened.

Grace Nichols proposed that SHARE make a presentation about the microgrid proposal to Public Employee Federation (PEF) employees, many of whom work within a few hundred meters of the proposed power plant.

I provided a quick review of the sequence of events that led to the ANSWERS closure early in 1994 and said state agencies such as the Departments of Environmental Conservation and Health will not publicly criticize the operations of a power plant owned by another state agency. ANSWERS was owned by the state Office of General Services. Keith agreed with my comment that we cannot rely on the regulatory system to protect us.

Merton concluded the evening saying “We can and we will win this.”

*Geothermal continued from page 1*

on the earth.) He said the temperature in caves in NY is about 52 degrees Fahrenheit and about 77 F in Florida.

Pipes are put into the ground, water and small amounts of antifreeze are circulated through them taking in heat in winter and putting heat into the ground in summer. The process is highly efficient because the amount of heat transferred is vastly greater than the amount of electricity used. A six-inch hole is typically drilled 300 feet into the ground that collects considerable heat (thermal energy) along its long depth.

Geothermal, he said, has been taking off in New York in the last few years due to a \$15 million rebate program for ground source heat pumps. He said New York City now requires those who propose to construct new buildings to prove that geothermal is not feasible if they do not want to use it. National Grid, he said, likes geothermal because it helps to reduce summer peak electricity demand.

He said heating and hot water are the major energy uses in buildings and if they can be moved to renewables, it would be a vast improvement in efforts to limit climate change.

He said he is in discussion with Union Col-

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# The City is Selling 363 Acres of Land in Coeymans Will the New Owner be a Good Steward of the Land?

by Tom Ellis

About 25 years back, Albany politicians made a foolish decision to purchase a large property in Coeymans (ten miles south of Albany), hoping to site a regional landfill there to replace the Rapp Road Landfill that DEC was then threatening to soon close. Albany took many years purchasing the property, eventually spending more than \$5 million for 363 acres. During that decade city officials apparently never carefully examined the site to see if it was suitable for a landfill. Maybe they thought DEC was such a pushover that it would not matter if it contained large tracts of wetlands which it does.

The landfill was never sited. In recent years Albany has paid annual property taxes of about \$100,000 on the tract. Albany Mayor Kathy Sheehan has often indicated her desire to sell the property. No one was willing to pay anywhere near the high purchase price Albany paid. About a year ago, DEC hinted that it might be willing to buy it for about \$620,000 but the sale was never completed.

More recently, Carver Laraway, owner of the Port of Coeymans, made a purchase offer of about \$620,000 that the Albany Common Council accepted (the vote was 9-1) on November 6. Mr. Laraway is a controversial businessman with supporters and opponents in Coeymans and Ravena.

One opponent of the sale to Mr. Laraway

is Barbara Heinzen, owner of property in the Hamlet of Coeymans, who wrote an October 29 letter to council members Judy Doesschate and Richard Conti in which she offered seven reasons to reject the sale. Below are numbers four and five.

“Fourth, our experience with Carver Laraway as a businessman in the Town of Coeymans is that he does not respect environmental assets of any kind. He persuaded the previous Town Board to dismiss the need for any environmental review when he asked the Town to rezone agricultural/residential land to industrial uses by the Coeymans Industrial Park. This was over the objections of several major environmental groups and despite the obvious risks of serious impacts on the landscape, the waters of the Coeymans Creek and Hudson River, and the quality of life in the Hamlet of Coeymans and the Village of Ravena. This rezoning was challenged immediately in an Article 78, but thanks to repeated legal delaying tactics, the entire area has now been developed without any ruling on the legality of the rezoning. More recently, Carver Laraway persuaded the Village of Ravena to rezone about 70 acres of land for heavy industry, despite its proximity to residential housing and the local primary school, again without any environmental impact study. Over the past year, I have seen barges for the Port of Coeymans anchored alongside Schodack

Island and have been told that they are simply tied to trees on the Island. Is this the action of someone who values the environmental resources of the Hudson River and its watershed?”

“Fifth, our experience with Carver Laraway’s businesses as neighbors is that they do not respect the needs of the local community. While he has frequently agreed to limits on noise from the Industrial Park and the Port, he routinely ignores them. Residents have been assaulted by noise at all hours of the day and night, on weekdays and weekends. People in the hamlets of both Coeymans and New Baltimore, as well as Main St, Ravena, are constantly assaulted by heavy industrial trucks within 10 ft of their front doors. My neighbors and I have repeatedly experienced both the traffic and the noise. With that record, and his disregard for environmental care, any promises Mr Laraway makes about protecting the wetlands of this property must be taken with a large grain of salt. He will not respect his promises, so why should you believe them?”

Think about it: Albany obtains its high quality water from the higher elevations in the western part of Coeymans. For many years Albany politicians threatened to wreck a huge parcel in the eastern part of the same town. Now Albany politicians are apparently selling these 363 acres to someone with a very controversial environmental record. Is Albany a good neighbor?

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## Updates in Brief – Trucks, Zero-Waste Tulipfest and a Leaking Landfill

by Tom Ellis

Rensselaer city residents have intensified their efforts to stop nearly 100 large trucks per day from driving through the downtown. The trucks, which have 18, 22, 24, or 26 wheels, supposedly carry construction and demolition (C&D) debris wastes. They traverse Broadway and turn east onto Partition Street with its steep hill en-route to a C&D dump at the east end of Partition Street.

The trucks arrive beginning at 6:30 each weekday morning; dozens go by before 7:30, and most before noon, five days a week, 250 days per year, year after year.. Each truck makes a return trip rattling the neighborhood. Residents view the truck traffic as a major public health issue due to the huge volume of trucks, the steepness of the Partition Street hill, noise, falling debris, dirt, dust, diesel exhaust, and brake fumes. Many of the houses on the north side of Partition Street are very close to the road. Some of the trucks

are not fully covered on the way in and many are not covered at all on the return trip. Residents can feel the vibrations as the trucks go by and are certain that downtown Rensselaer can never reach its potential as long as this immense truck traffic continues.

This still-unnamed group is seeking help from people with expertise deciphering environmental impact statements and could use the help of a pro bono attorney. For more information or if you would like to help, call Partition Street resident Lou Sebesta @ 518-915-3451 or via email at lou.sebesta@gmail.com.

In other news, residents from area counties are meeting regularly to propose healthy and sustainable solid waste solutions and create community and political pressure to have them implemented. They met with a group of Albany County legislators in October about expanding composting, and will soon propose to the City of Albany that it make the 2018 Tulip Fest a zero waste event.

Times Union reporter Brian Nearing reported November 18 that a test “of water leaking from from a pipe that drains the Colonie town

landfill into the Mohawk River found elevated levels of PFOA,” the same industrial chemical found in the Hoosick Falls (Rensselaer County) drinking water a few years ago. The Hudson River advocacy group Riverkeeper took the samples. The towns of Halfmoon and Waterford continue to strenuously oppose a town of Colonie application to nearly triple the size of its old dump located on the south shore of the Mohawk River. DEC has yet to respond to requests made more than a year ago by Waterford and Halfmoon town governments for DEC to conduct a formal adjudicatory hearing on the dump expansion proposal. .

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### Richard Kavanaugh

It is with deep sadness that we note the passing of Richard Kavanaugh on November 2, 2017. Richard often played music at Save the Pine Bush December holiday dinners.

Our deepest sympathies are extended to his family and friends. Dick will be much missed.

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lege in Schenectady about possibly converting 42 houses on Seward Avenue (Seward Place) to geothermal, and Rhinebeck [Dutchess County] is contemplating converting the entire village.

During the Q&A, he said even in densely built-up neighborhoods, geothermal wells can be drilled in back yards if there is enough space for a truck the size of a fire truck to work. Saint Patrick's Cathedral on Fifth Avenue in Manhattan now uses geothermal; the holes are 2000 feet deep. He said in Denmark it is now forbidden to replace failed fossil fuel systems with new fossil fuel.

Installing geothermal, he said, will be required if New York is to meet its stated renewable energy goals.

A moderately sized single family conversion would cost about \$20,000, which is affordable for many homeowners. In return a \$3000 annual fuel oil bill would be replaced by a \$1500 increase in the electric bill. A \$6000 rebate and federal tax credits also help with the geothermal economics. Ground source geothermal conversions, he said, typically doubles someone's electric bill.

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*Next Dinner Dates*

**Wednesday, December 20, 2017**

**Wednesday, January 17, 2018**

**Wednesday, February 21, 2018**

**Wednesday, March 21, 2018**

**Wednesday, April 18, 2018**

**Wednesday, May 16, 2018**

**Wednesday, June 20, 2018**

## The Fight for Indigenous Water Rights in Labrador



*The Muskrat Falls dam will poison with mercury the water that the Inuit people fish.*

*Many Save the Pine Bush members recall the April 20, 2016 dinner presentation by Jim Learning of Labrador about the dangers of large scale hydro electric development on Canadian Native peoples and the environment. The electricity is for export to the US. [See the May/June 2016 SPB Newsletter]*

*If you would like to learn more and get the latest news, Jim's colleague, Roberta Benefel, Director of the Grand Riverkeeper Labrador, will be speaking at this event:*

### **Roberta Benefel will Speak at the The James Connolly Forum**

***Tuesday, December 5, 2017 at the Oakwood Community Center, 313 10th St., Troy, NY.***

Roberta Benefel is the Co-founder, Vice President and Riverkeeper for Grand Riverkeeper Labrador, (GRKL) a member of the nearly 300 member strong International Organization, Waterkeeper Alliance. Ms. Benefel continues to be actively involved in the fight to save not just her own river, the Churchill in Labrador from massive dams, but has broadened her fight to include the last remaining wild rivers throughout Canadawhere Canadian Provincial Crown Corporations and Large Contractors conspire to create dams on every possible site.

Co-Sponsored by The Solidarity Committee of the Capital District. Bethlehem Neighbors for Peace. Albany Democratic Socialists of America and the Capital District Socialist Party

Location: Oakwood Community Center, 313 10th St., Troy, NY. Located Exit 9E off 787 Collar City Bridge for Rte 7: on left at 2nd light between 9th and 10th Sts. Parking on left on 9th St., Old Fire station building parking lot left on 10th Use the door facing Hoosick St.

Donation of \$5 requested, \$2 unemployed and students more information: 518 407 3582

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