



Scotch Ridge Solar Community Engagement Plan

In an effort to commence the community engagement process for the NYSERDA RESRFP21-1 Program, Nexamp (The Proposer) has developed this Community Engagement Plan for advancing New York State's clean energy goals as part of the 94-c approval process led by the NYS Office for Renewable Energy Siting (ORES). The plan as outlined below provides information on how Nexamp and its partners will facilitate broad public participation regarding the proposed 20 MW Scotch Ridge Solar project in the Town of Duanesburg, Schenectady County.

Nexamp and its partners will engage the community and stakeholders regarding renewable energy within the community and at the Scotch Ridge Solar site. Educating and engaging stakeholders in the project site communities in and around Duanesburg will be essential to building support for the program. The future investments in each community will help to develop underutilized sites and provide renewable energy options. Goals for community engagement during this project include:

- Identify and interview key stakeholders regarding potential priority sites in a timely fashion;
- Educate residents in the Town of Duanesburg, and transparently address any concerns that may arise;
- Ensure that any community member has an opportunity to provide input through an in-person or virtual format.

Nexamp will work with NYSERDA to determine whether the community engagement is in-person, virtual or hybrid depending on factors such as location and COVID-19 pandemic protocols. This document describes the process for conducting public outreach for either of these scenarios.

1. ENGAGEMENT WITH AUTHORITY HAVING JURISDICTION (AHJ) AND SCHOOL DISTRICT

The initial public outreach would entail contact with local officials regarding the Scotch Ridge Solar facility development and information about the participation in RESRFP21-1. Key stakeholders would include elected officials and local economic development and planning officials who could assist in outlining any potential concerns, opportunities, or environmental justice issues with each priority site prior to holding public events.

The project site is located in the Town of Duanesburg, Schenectady County. The entire site lies within the boundary of the Duanesburg Central School District. Nexamp will contact local officials in the AHJ and School District, as well as the local economic development agencies, via phone. The objectives of these conversations would be to introduce the project to local officials and gain an understanding of community needs, potential community benefits and any potential obstacles. Ideally, the municipality and county will work together to achieve their goals and communicate during the approval process effectively.

The list of contacts includes the following:

- Town of Duanesburg Supervisor Roger Tidball, rtidball@duanesburg.net or 518-895-8920 x5 (elected 2013)
- Duanesburg Central School District, Dr. James Niedermeier, Superintendent, jniedermeier@duanesburg.org or (518) 895-2279
- Schenectady County Metroplex / IDA, Jayme Lahut, Executive Director, jlahut@schenectadymetroplex.org or 518-377-1109
- Capital District Regional Planning Commission, Mark Castiglione, Executive Director, mark@cdrpc.org or 518-453-0850

Deliverable: Spreadsheet with information about outreach activities, including name, contact information, date of call, overview of conversations and additional stakeholders per local officials' recommendations.

2. OUTREACH STRATEGIES AND ACTIVITIES

A primary purpose of public outreach will be to engage stakeholders and other interested parties through in-person or virtual meetings, and provide basic information on the project and related public events. The Nexamp team will ask stakeholders if they anticipate any concerns with the proposed presentation and if they have any suggestions for approach or additional stakeholders to contact prior to the public meeting. Team members will initially contact stakeholders via phone call or email, schedule virtual meetings and/or meet in person if appropriate.

Methods of communications and specific channels Nexamp intends to use to disseminate Bid Facility information include:

- Nexamp Scotch Ridge Solar project website, and NYSERDA website, if possible;
- Schenectady County / Town of Duanesburg websites;
 - <https://www.schenectadycounty.com/>
 - <https://www.duanesburg.net/>
- News media including the Schenectady Daily Gazette / <https://dailygazette.com/>
- Other news media will also be notified of the meetings including local TV affiliates, cable news, and others:
 - <https://www.news10.com/news/schenectady-county/>
 - <https://cbs6albany.com/news/local>
 - <https://spectrumlocalnews.com/nys/capital-region>
- Duanesburg Central School District website;
 - <https://www.duanesburg.org/>
- Local Radio (Commercial and Public Radio); and,
 - <https://www.albany.com/about-albany/radio-stations/>
 - <https://www.wamc.org/>
- Social Media, including Town of Duanesburg Facebook and other local sites, as appropriate.
 - <https://www.facebook.com/DuanesburgNY>

Nexamp will also accommodate those who do have Internet access by placing copies of project documentation at public locations such as Town Halls and/or public libraries for public review.

Deliverable: Summary of Stakeholder Engagement including documentation of correspondence, public records of meetings, communications with local officials and letters of support.

3. BENEFITS TO DISADVANTAGED COMMUNITIES

NYSERDA encourages the establishment of programs established in host or proximate communities to specifically direct benefits to disadvantaged communities; therefore, Nexamp and its partners would identify low-income neighborhoods that are proximate to the project site before the project commences. While the project site is not located within a NYS-defined Disadvantaged Community, Duanesburg has a low rate of college educated residents (at 25%, this is lower than the rates of the county at 32% or NYS as a whole at

36%). The Nexamp team would work with local officials to determine how the project may best benefit the host communities, potentially through job training, utilization of local contractors or other strategies.

Deliverable: Summary of potential benefits to disadvantaged and Environmental Justice communities.

4. PUBLIC EVENTS

Nexamp will work with NYSERDA to plan public events and educational opportunities utilizing the following strategies to ensure proper outreach and a wide range of attendees from the host community. In terms of frequency and duration, Nexamp will plan for a minimum of one meeting at the outset of the project to introduce the project and gain information about desired community benefits. Another meeting will occur when the community benefits are narrowed down to a specific set of choices. Nexamp will hold public events over the course of the project as needed.

For either an online or in-person meeting, Nexamp will use following procedure for meeting notices. Continuity of notification methods and media types from the beginning of the project will be key to ensuring the public receives program information in a consistent manner. Notices or ads for all project-related meetings and open houses will be publicized using multiple media and marketing formats including those listed above in Task 2.

The Nexamp team will email notices to the project news media list 10-14 days in advance of the meeting. Notices will also provide additional information on how the public can join the meeting and participate. Nexamp will work with NYSERDA and local partners to ensure that key media contacts are notified.

Deliverable: Press releases, ads and other promotional materials for public events such as Open Houses.

A. Open Houses

Upon approval and collaboration with NYSERDA, and after stakeholder conversations, Nexamp may schedule, promote and hold an open house in the Scotch Ridge Solar vicinity to introduce the project, discuss the benefits of renewable development in general and to the community in particular, and explain the purpose and process of this program. This could be done virtually or in-person depending on the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic protocols including input from NYSERDA, with the goal of receiving feedback on the project and potential benefits. Participants will be asked to state their opinions at “stations” so the Nexamp team and NYSERDA can gauge acceptance and or potential concerns with the project. Nexamp team members will staff each station and be available for questions or dialogue with participants.

For virtual public engagement: Open houses will be held via an internet-based video conferencing format. Zoom video-conferencing will be used for all stakeholder and public meetings. The Zoom format will allow participants to view presentations by Nexamp and listen to dialogue among other attendees. If deemed necessary but the number of attendees, online breakout rooms may be utilized in place of stations, or the stations will be available via online survey software or other online platforms for participants to provide comments. Nexamp will test the online meeting system prior to the meeting beginning.

For members of the public that are not able to attend the live video conference, the meeting will be recorded and viewable on the Nexamp website. The public will have the ability to engage the project team with questions during the public comment portion of the meetings.

For in-person meetings, the community engagement team will present information in a similar format, in locations to be determined with NYSERDA and local officials (for example, at the Duanesburg Town Hall or school auditorium).

For either meeting format, meetings will be recorded and be available on the Nexamp project website the day after the meeting has concluded. The public will be able to provide comments or ask questions on the meeting for a week on the website. Additional public comments may be collected via a Survey Monkey link.

PROPOSED OPEN HOUSE AGENDA

1. Introductions
 - a. Town Supervisor intro and ask other board members in attendance to raise hands.
 - b. Mention partners such as Schenectady County IDA, County Legislators, property owners and others.

2. RESRFP21-1 Program Background and Goals
 - a. Project Team introductions and roles
 - Project Manager
 - Environmental Permitting and Engineering
 - Community Engagement, Community Benefits
 - b. Program Background and Goals
 - c. Overview of solar energy, the solar project development process and successful solar development examples in similar locations.

3. Scotch Ridge Solar Site Development Plan
 - a. Why the Scotch Ridge Solar site?
 - b. Schedule (include a graphic that provides a visual representation of where we are in the project development process and the different opportunities for community input)
 - c. Proposed Buildable Area
 - d. Present visual simulations (high-level) – Photos of typical arrays only, only for a general idea of project appearance, not site-specific. Similar successful projects in the region.

4. Host Community Benefits
 - a. Discuss generally, mention opportunity for public input via online survey.

5. Questions / Feedback
 - a. Before meeting – via Nexamp project website
 - b. During meeting – chat questions (team will monitor)
 - c. After meeting – online survey or Nexamp project website

Deliverable: Summary of Open House Meetings.

5. COMMUNITY BENEFITS

Nexamp will work with the NYSERDA project team and stakeholders to create an updated, expanded, and/or project-specific Community Benefits Package based on NYSERDA's existing Community Benefits Packages for solar projects. This will provide information on the benefits the community might receive for hosting the proposed project, which may include PILOT agreements and Host Community agreements. The community may also need environmental support assistance through an attorney and environmental specialist or engineer, to help assure that the HCA is fair and supports local needs and desires.

The package would also include a resource section outlining redevelopment resources including grant opportunities, workforce development opportunities, renewable energy options and other elements that would go beyond NYSERDA's direct offerings and indicate that NYSERDA is open to how the projects will be designed, potentially even being co-located with other existing or future uses. As noted above, NYSERDA encourages the establishment of programs established in host or proximate communities to specifically direct benefits to disadvantaged communities.

Deliverable: Summary of proposed community benefits derived from conversations with stakeholders and open house.

6. ENGAGEMENT ON PILOT AGREEMENTS AND HCAs

Nexamp will coordinate with the IDA and economic development agency in Schenectady County to discuss potential PILOT agreements and Host Community Agreements. The team will coordinate with Jayme Lahut, Executive Director of the Schenectady County Metroplex / IDA, who would provide a connection to the IDA Board.

Deliverable: Memo summarizing conversations with Schenectady County IDA with overview of PILOT agreements and HCA ideas.

7. LOCAL INTERESTS AND CONCERNS

Nexamp will inquire about specific local interests and concerns when engaging the AHJs, Duanesburg Central School District, and the IDA and economic development offices in Schenectady County. In addition to potential PILOT agreements as mentioned above, the applicant will determine to what extent the following types of benefits are important to local officials and residents. Local concerns may include but not limited to:

- Utility cost savings
- Workforce development and job training
- Other technical support
- Public or school improvements with a community focus
- Equipment funds or purchases
- Infrastructure funding or enhancement

Deliverable: Summary of local interests and concerns.

8. PROPOSED MITIGATION STRATEGIES

Nexamp understands that local officials and residents may have concerns about the Scotch Ridge Solar project that the applicant will need to mitigate. Common concerns include visual impacts, construction impacts and a temporary increase in traffic during construction. Nexamp anticipates that it will gain additional information about potential impacts and mitigation strategies during the community engagement process, and will work with the AHJs on these plans. Proposed mitigation strategies may include but are not limited to:

- Decommissioning Plan
- Host Community Agreement
- Landscaping Plan
- Site the project in a way that minimizes or mitigates the loss of agricultural land
- Site project in a way that mitigates visual impacts and general visibility from surrounding roads and parcels. Install fencing that does not impact the movement of wildlife.
- Maintain existing native vegetation to the extent possible, and include native pollinators when planting new plant species.

- Stockpile all topsoil disturbed during construction to restore surfaces later in the process, and revegetate restored soil areas using best practices.
- Maintain a protective buffer around any wetlands or other environmentally sensitive areas.
- If site is in a grazing area, maintain temporary fencing until vegetation is established and able to accommodate grazing after construction.

Deliverable: Summary of proposed mitigation strategies.

9. PUBLIC FEEDBACK AND COMMENT METHODS

Opportunities to provide public comments will be facilitated via the video conferencing format “live” during the meeting and after the meeting on the project website. Open House presentations will also be recorded for those that could not attend or did not have appropriate software to attend the meetings. The public will be able to engage the process at any time by accessing the project website. For those without internet access, Nexamp will work with local officials to post information about the proposed project in public venues and set up a phone line for public comments.

Deliverable: Flyer with project website and phone number to post in public venues such as Town Hall, school district offices, post offices and other appropriate locations.