

Suffolk County Renewable Energy Jobs Task Force
Suffolk County Legislature

Meeting Minutes
2:40 PM - April 26, 2023

Attendance:

Bridget Fleming, Suffolk County Legislator
Rosalie Drago, Commissioner of Labor
Robert Martinez, Office of Legislator Caracappa
Jerome Bost, IBEW
David Kennedy, Suffolk County Alliance of Chambers
Melanie Morris-Carsch, Suffolk County Community College
Philip Rugile, Executive Director for Workforce Advancement
Kevin McDonald, The Nature Conservancy
John Schneidawin, County Executive Steve Bellone's Office
Irene Donohue, Chief of Staff to Leg. Bridget Fleming
Michael Iasilli, Legislative Aide to Bridget Fleming

I. Salute to the Flag

II. Introduction of Task Force Members

Members of the Task Force introduced themselves:

- David Kennedy, Suffolk County Alliance of Chambers - representing businesses
Renewable Energy is important for the environment.
- Phil Rugile, Executive Director for Workforce Advancement - seeking advanced
manufacturing and advocates for the manufacturing industry.
- Kevin McDonald, Nature Conservancy - seeking to expand the green economy to
expand Suffolk County's opportunities for its residents.
- Robert Martinez, Leg. Caracappa's Office - representing the legislator.
- Leg. Bridget Fleming, Second Leg. District - has led many efforts in sustainability
and environmental protection, there's a lot to look forward to with working with
Leg. Caracappa, looking forward to chairing the group.
- Rosalie Drago, Commissioner of the Labor Dept. - DOL is the training arm for
underemployed, unemployed, priorities lower income communities. Seeking
funding for apprenticeship and renewable energy jobs.
- Melanie Morris Carsch, Workforce Development Dept at SCCC - explore the
renewable energy space, has experience with outreach to High Schools and Middle
Schools on renewable energy as a career path.

- John Schneidawin, Suffolk County Econ Dev and Planning - looking to provide support and grow the green job economy here on Long Island.
- Jerome Bost, IBEW - wants to discuss job creation for the workers he represents in the energy industry.

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III. Public Comment

- No one from the public was in attendance

IV. Discussion and the Task Force Final Report

Legislator Fleming:

Before getting into the structure and content of the report, I wanted the group to discuss how best to approach the meetings, better understand renewable energy opportunity. I want to highlight merits of the Federal Bipartisan Infrastructure Act (55 billion across the US) and the opportunity available for the County. The opportunities from the state Environmental Bond Act (4.2 billion dollars) will help in the creation and transition to renewable energy jobs. These will give Suffolk County the opportunity to create a vision, create specific recommendations and action items. It is critical to address the job gaps, keep people here on Long Island. The creation of a final report will be from the perspective of the stakeholders on how government can optimize the funds and offer recommendations for the County's future. With regard to how we go about the task at hand, welcomed perspectives on considerations, shape the work of the task force.

Philip Rugile:

There is a communications issue; that the opinion of most business owners is that the work, the skills, talents, and products are going to come from overseas. Many are not really aware of the domestic opportunities. The reality is that these are long-term projects (Offshore wind) with opportunity of thousands of jobs. The thing we have to focus on is onshore, not offshore. Contracts from Orsted, and the trickling down of other awards. Will that get trickled down? Supply chain and workforce are intertwined. When these projects go through the next phase, worker certifications are going to be essential. You can't get a job unless you are GWO certified.

Leg. Fleming:

In terms of the report, is there is a central place to assess the data? That we can use it to compile a set of baseline information?

Philip Rugile:

I run a website with supply chain data, OSWSupplychain.org. NYSERDA has launched a workforce website and provides valuable jobs data. Plus other aspects of the NYSERDA offshoot pages. And some of the developers have websites.

Leg. Fleming:

For the purpose of the report, we can use it to compile sources.

Commissioner Drago:

I have worked on a talent pipeline map with Long Island FED, Orsted, etc... There is also union employers, which bring about pre-apprenticeship programs. There is a lot there. To your question earlier, the report needs to define the renewable energy sectors with a career ladder, then what are the careers in the renewable sectors (onshore and offshore), wind, solar, EV, battery storage, defining renewable sectors, then defining the careers. I'd say make a career map as well as aggregating all the links for all the jobs, and then an education and training providers, Who are the providers in Long Island now? This is probably harder to do. What jobs are available now? What do the next 5 years or 10 years look like? If you are in High School, what should you be thinking of? First tier and second tier. What are the requirements for job certifications, what are the MWBE. There are requirements for local hiring in these contracts, so we have to prepare prospective workers and businesses who are doing the hiring.

Leg. Fleming:

This sounds very good. From the job seeker's perspective and the manufacturer's perspective, could the report help address the misconception that the jobs need to come from overseas? What is the necessary government action that will create the jobs to resolve the misconception?

Kevin McDonald:

I see that is the reason why you formed the taskforce. What are the needs for Long Islanders? What is the vision and why do we care? What are the barriers present? And what are the opportunities? A story worth mentioning from Harvard Business Review. Kia and Hyundai in the early 90s had a strategic government-private partnership that had a strategy, directly how government supports job growth, that's the story to tell. All this emerging activity indicates that we need to hone a strategy to embark on creating opportunities or remove barriers. It can turn out nicely, but it's possible it won't. So we need a strategy to ensure we create these opportunities.

Com. Drago:

We need to promote it. That is the primary function. Educators and businesses don't know about it. If this report can be publicly shared to the audience that need to know this. It's going to happen but we need to demonstrate...

Kevin McDonald:

One addition- in a moment like this, when there is all this energy on how we make this work, there has to be a communication strategy broad enough to explain to the public that we need to explain what changes are happening and why. We need to explain how greater electrical capacity and battery storage is in service to a more economical and an electric-centric functioning home. We should consider an active media strategy that emphasizes here is the vision, needs, opportunities, and this is why you should care.

Leg. Fleming:

Education and marketing needs to be a huge component. But it is not just explaining. It is about actual steps that can be taken. Whether that means ensuring the government has the resources to make this a reality. Maybe we need structure in government to support an ongoing effort to push this. You talked about no one knows about battery storage or solar... I have solar on my own home, EV car. Part of that is because of government programs, which gave homeowners a tax incentive for putting solar on their homes. I wouldn't have that ability without government making it happen. Education is a very important part. A report by its nature is an educational device. At the same time, we need to look for concrete action items. That way hungry legislators and new government leaders know what steps need to be taken legislatively to help the program.

John Schneidawin:

In one of the Emerging Industries Series I helped put together with the HIA was to help bring awareness to emerging industries. It is important to identify pathways out there. Awareness is key, there are young professionals we are losing on a daily basis. I think we should be working in tandem with awareness to identify those areas. This taskforce can have an impact on awareness that we bring to the residents that these industries are bringing to the region. I would love to incorporate this work with the next Emerging Industries Series with HIA. August/September would likely be the next event and would like to have some collaboration with this committee.

Jerome Bost:

There was recently a discussion about gas hook ups with new buildings with underestimating the impact it has on labor. Many of our members conduct that kind of work. There is a qualification necessary as they go in the program. I think it's important to remember, as mentioned, that we don't have to look overseas. There are many members right here who are ready to go to work. The only hindrance is gaining licensing in specific industries that may be slightly new.

Leg. Fleming:

We need to look at what are the credentials necessary for people to take advantage of these opportunities.

Melanie Morris-Carsch:

I think awareness has two components– the employees and also the employers. Some employers aren't even aware of the opportunities. Suffolk Community College is a good institution with outreach to High Schools and college students. The national offshore wind training center is currently under construction, but is the facility on the Brentwood campus. By tapping into those students and employers, maybe we can couple that with another program at Suffolk. A direct outcome I envision is, if we identify a specific outreach program that would be helpful for the community, which might aid in the jobs and apprenticeship opportunities for students.

Com. Drago:

Anyone who goes to work offshore has to have Global Wind Organization (GWO) Safety training. The permanent housing of that training is at the Brentwood location. They are doing a pop up training at the Brentwood campus to meet the demand. Those are folks who are already signed up to do the work.

Leg. Fleming:

NEXT LI and the Roushe Foundation did a report in Newsday that they termed a "Blue economy." One component of that is wind jobs. They predict 7700 jobs by 2050.

<https://next.newsday.com/>

Com. Drago:

There are a whole bunch of unions doing construction right now. 1049, Local 138, etc...

Leg. Fleming:

Is there a place we could find data on that right now? One of the things I think is important is that we need baseline data.

Com. Drago:

We know most of the employers doing the work. We can have someone sit with the employers and map out the careers and who is doing what. We can assign someone to go through and list occupations, career ladder, credentials, etc., as a good starting point. There are multiple layers of employers, and we are just talking about offshore wind.

Leg. Fleming:

It is a lot of work. We have to do it in a reasonable way. I want to acknowledge my staff Michael Iasilli and Irene Donohue. Irene has taken the lead in the creation of a number of reports with our office. It is going to be a lot of work but it is exciting. We have put together great reports. So you are suggesting that we should find someone maybe on the County Executive Staff or Legislative Staff who can sit with myself or developers to talk about this?

Com. Drago:

We can assign someone from our team or an intern with an HR background to find out this info for a couple months.

Philip Rugile:

We have to remember that developers are not the ones who are going to hire the workers. They run the project, but they create the supply chain, which yields the jobs. They are just going to tell you what has gone on in Europe and how they did it in the past. We need the tier 1 OEMs, the manufacturers need to sit on this. It would be invaluable getting a coordinated statement from local and state government, and bureau of Ocean and Energy Management on what their level of

commitment to enforce the policies they put in place in the RFPs. We have already documented cases where GE puts out a request for skilled electrical workers with 2-week notices, and then the workers will find out they have to be certified for the requirement. IBEW will look at it and realize that there's not enough time to fulfill GE's requirements. From there, GE will hire whoever they want to bring in.

John Schneidawin:

Yes, there will be a requirement to have local labor involved, there is one member of labor, but everyone is from the outside, non-union work. That is problematic.

Philip Rugile:

Exactly.

Melanie Morris-Carsch:

Now with the GWO training happening in Brentwood, that could potentially help alleviate some of the additional layers.

Leg. Fleming:

You say a coordinated statement. I gather the issue is staff on the government level. To the extent that you need an intentional coordinated recognition for the training requirements and then a commitment to enforcing those requirements. It sounds like focus is what government needs to prioritize these requirements. That sounds like staffing.

Kevin:

Or you have to require that job notices have to be issued more in advance to have people know how and when to respond. GE needs to give more notice for specifications for on-site employment.

Leg. Fleming:

We would have to find out if the County can require that an RFP that concerns Long Island projects needs to have additional notice requirements.

Com. Drago:

Or at least advocate. A focused advocacy might work.

Leg. Fleming:

But there is nothing like someone sitting at a desk to provide oversight over these notices.

Philip Rugile:

They set up a database of companies who have raised their hands to take part in the bidding process. But the companies put the bid out three days before it is due. The state has a requirement but it is not... (inaudible)

Leg. Fleming:

But the thing with that is we are seeing European companies are more accustomed to some of this and have a workforce that is ready to go, and they have an advantage. How do we get local businesses into some of these items?

David Kennedy:

My background is public relations and communications. This is a microcosm of what I hear, especially members of ours, the "lack of a skilled workforce." A lot comes down to stigma in education - trade jobs vs professional jobs. Long term I'd like to see a change in mindset. There is a lack of understanding at the high school level. What are we doing to drive students to these professions?

Leg. Fleming:

We see a parallel in coding and technical fields. Folks who don't make it through college, you know, Silicon Valley entrepreneurs. It would be good to look for opportunities that are emerging in the renewable energy industry for kids who want to dive right in.

Com. Drago:

In addition, you solve the problem with BOCES. The school district pays for it, which provides pathways to technical jobs. However, it is underfunded in the school districts that are lacking funding for BOCES education. Remove the burden on the school district.

John Schneidawin:

When I sat on the school board, it's a narrative that has to change from the school, showcasing the benefits of the trades and BOCES. We need to remove the stigma. NYSERDA has a Youth Build program and they are looking to get involved with the schools. If there is a way to integrate NYSERDA with the schools, and the training at Suffolk Community College.

Leg. Fleming:

So our recommendations don't just have to require action by County government. It can call for funding at the state level for BOCES.

John Schneidawin:

I sit on a board called REFIT, Reforming Education Financial Inequities Today. They deal with low to moderate income school districts. One of the challenges they have with BOCES programming is that there are caps on salaries of the technical instructors. Some of these salaries you can't survive on. So we need to find ways to provide better pay for workforce training professionals.

Leg. Fleming:

Great point. I wanted to move on to the Final Report structure, and who might be willing to help us in the assembling of it. I would like to see that we have the following:

1. Introduction
2. Executive Summary

3. Data driven section on what jobs are currently available; and the criteria needed, certifications

Kevin McDonald:

In past experience. The model that I have found was either the issue like “training”

It should follow an Issue -> solution process as such:

Employer - Employee

Accessing Jobs in Renewable Energy - how to learn about jobs in the renewable energy sector. Who is doing what at the High School level? What is the landscape for the Employer?

What is the industry demand for jobs? Here are the employers hiring now, i.e., Industry, Union, High Schools/BOCES

Leg. Fleming:

I think that is a great idea. I suppose we will find what those issues are. Is there a value of carving out the current landscape?

Robert Martinez:

What I have gathered, everyone in the industry is doing something but no one knows of it. So everyone is living in silos. Everyone is doing their own thing. I think the commissioner said it very eloquently. There needs to be a conduit so everyone feeds into it. An email, a database. What about the school districts and what they're doing. How can we share this?

Com. Drago:

One of the things about the approach is framing the problem. “Accessing” Jobs for Renewable Energy implies that there are jobs available. Access being the word. How to access or learn about jobs in the renewable energy sector. And when we discuss what includes or what requires certification and training that includes a section on what the schools are doing. Which schools have a program, or which do not? That way advocacy can be targeted efficiently.

Leg. Fleming:

So the current landscape includes what the industry looks like at the moment, from the employers' and manufacturers' perspective. And secondly, what it looks like for those getting access to employment which includes training and education.

Com. Drago:

I would say, what does the industry demand for jobs? And then, here are the employers in the space that are hiring right now. And then who is training, schools, unions, etc..

Philip Rugile:

These are things we don't have to create from scratch.

Leg. Fleming:

Yes, these are things we can gather from what Bob said as to the silos.

Melanie Morris-Carsch:

NYSERDA has a really great career mapping for offshore wind specifically, but it goes to every industry and sector related to offshore wind, and establishes a pathway.

Leg. Fleming:

The digital world is great in that it provides links, so we will be linking to NYSERDA.

Philip Rugile:

Definitely also OSWsupplychain.org.

Com. Drago:

I will send to your office all the websites we have. As well as career pipeline map; who is hiring locally?

Leg. Fleming:

That's great and do we have all of each other's information so we can coordinate?

Irene Donohue:

Not yet, but I will send around a spreadsheet with everyone's information.

Leg. Fleming:

When you are talking about the talent pipeline map, is that something that is being developed, do you need support?

Com. Drago:

I will have to go back and take a look. Some of it is complete, but there are some gaps. They don't know who is hiring right now.

Leg. Fleming:

Are you suggesting that it would be valuable for the report itself to contain that information or for the report to recommend that the work be done to develop and maintain the information?

Com. Drago:

I would have to get back to you to see what kind of capacity we have in the department.

Leg. Fleming:

Ok. Moving forward, if we can demonstrate that if there is an intentional focus on the behalf of County Government, maybe we can invest in it.

Melanie Morris Carsch:

NYSERDA does have other career mapping for HVAC, heat pump, green buildings, bioenergy, solar, etc...

Leg. Fleming:

We haven't even talked about HVAC. And its benefits to energy savings. I think we have a good start. What about the financial support from other level of government. I've mentioned my own solar on the roof. Certainly with the EV chargers, the program coming from the Biden Administration, does that not offer huge job creation?

Philip Rugile - We really should be addressing it in the renewable sector, offshore and onshore wind, hydrogen, battery storage, research projects in recycling. Blades that are decommissioned, we will need a warehouse. But we should identify the other areas as well because they are potentially job producing. You have career paths which are certification bound, skilled workers, trade unions, and then you have engineers and project managers and analysts, the four year degree side.

Leg. Fleming:

Because we have only four meetings, I think it will be helpful for my team to generate for the task force, a list of sections to appear in the report. We will do that based on the minutes from today's discussion. Also, the grant funding issue, how can we get a comprehensive view of what support there is? If we have a sense of knowledge of where the money is, that should better our ability to tap into these resources. Money drives a lot of this.

Kevin McDonald:

I was going to consider that some people should be at future meetings.

Leg. Fleming:

We were thinking of potential presenters to fill in gaps in the record. On what topics?

Philip Rugile:

I think it depends on what we have identified.

Leg. Fleming:

So would it be helpful to have employers, job opportunities, state and federal?

John Schneidawin:

Perhaps we have presentations from the state and/or federal level on funding sources. Also, community benefit agreements can determine funding sources. There are various levels of support. Industry leaders would be beneficial too.

Kevin McDonald:

What if you have some people from the industry, from labor, and what if they were all in the same room? That's how you eviscerate the silos.

Leg. Fleming:

Can you speak specifically who the individuals may be? I was thinking someone from Sen. Schumer's office who can describe the bi-partisan infrastructure bill to explain it all.

Philip Rugile:

Jessica Dealy from NYSERDA might be good. Also, Peter Lyon may be able to speak to the supply chain issues.

John Schneidawin:

You also have Dave Whipple who is covering renewable energy from Empire State Development.

Leg. Fleming:

Maybe they can give an overview of NYS funding?

Kevin McDonald:

The County should seek regional economic development grants for the purpose of incubating an integrated strategy.

Leg. Fleming:

That is a very interesting strategy. You mean to say we are looking for a grant opportunity to create the ability for the County to do the work

Kevin McDonald:

Meaning that the County is the hub for strategy development, financial support, potential marketing and whatever else is needed from the report that underscores the best vision for what is needed for renewable energy, job opportunities, etc.

Philip Rugile:

The County could have a person or representative to help harness this opportunity for this industry. We are looking at something that is perhaps the largest since the aerospace industry.

Kevin McDonald:

The farm bureau is an example. We need an equivalent in the industry and government, like a renewable energy czar or liaison.

Jerome Bost:

When I formerly worked in a congressional office. Maybe we can ask Sen Schumer for a representative to send a liaison from renewable energy.

Philip Rugile:

I think we should avoid the use of the term czar and use liaison.

Leg. Fleming:

I think Jerome is speaking about someone from the federal government to sit in on the meeting.

Jerome Bost:

Yes, you have a congressional liaison for almost every federal agency, from HUD to DOJ. They will usually work to facilitate to get someone present.

Leg. Fleming:

It does sound more and more like we need to define the role in Suffolk County. What are the components of harnessing these opportunities?

Kevin McDonald:

And the need should define the role.

John Schneidawin:

I wanted to mention that Lisa Broughton handles some of this and her department does what it can with supporting the industry. It would be great to also have more county people at various conferences happening around the region to observe the impact on where we can go, and we can learn from them. I think we should try and find out how we can take part in a conference.

Melanie Morris Carsch:

Yesterday we had a supply chain conference hosted by Orsted. I invited over 200 students and not one attended. I think there is a misconception on what the opportunities are.

John Schneidawin:

It would be helpful though for a representative here to host events like that. So we can tap into the plethora of knowledge and academics, and professionals.

Leg. Fleming:

We were talking about recommending the liaison or czar to harness the opportunities. Are you saying you do that work with Lisa already?

John Schneidawin:

We try and do that. I have partnered with folks in the industry and our labor components, HIA, etc... to bring awareness to the opportunities that could be brought to Long Island.

Leg. Fleming:

Ok. So it is important to be clear that it's not that this work hasn't been done.

Kevin McDonald:

If you ask people what are the 3 most important issues that you think will help in the County's renewable energy effort. You either get 180 answers, unfocused. Or there is a few things that constantly pop, and you dig deeper. So we need focus.. Name 2-3 things that helps improve the County's position as it regards renewable energy adoption.

Leg. Fleming:

My hope is that we are framing the issues appropriately.

John Schneidawin:

What are the top priorities? The work is being done, but there is limited capacity.

Leg. Fleming:

This is fantastic what we have been discussing. As this evolves, there will be more concerns that rise to the surface.

Philip Rugile:

We do have one person who might be valuable as a presenter. That's Jenn Garvey with Orsted.

Leg. Fleming:

I am just concerned about the competitive nature of the industry and the ongoing competitive bid process they have with the County.

John Schneidawin:

Alana Russo is from National Grid and should be able to provide great insight. Especially, from a joint venture and foreign investment component.

Leg. Fleming

Another section in the report could be infrastructure, such as in hydrogen?

John Schneidawin:

That would be great. I would also say from an economic development perspective, to really have a better grasp on what the industry needs are, we need to attend these conferences. But unfortunately it can be challenging to get the approvals to go and so forth.

Leg. Fleming:

I think the value of the conventions is breaking down the silos, which is a major goal. Would anyone like to offer any other thoughts?

Irene to do the following:

Remind to submit links to include in the report

Irene to email the contact list to all

Draft of outline for Final Report

Conclusion of the meeting at 4:25