

LONG ISLAND / SUFFOLK

Decade-old document shows Islip had climate action plan

Advocates say the town had not followed "most" of the clean energy initiatives approved in 2009.



Islip turned a former landfill in Holbrook into a solar farm. Photo Credit: Jessica Rotkiewicz

By Antonio Planas

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A set of guidelines Islip approved in 2009 to address climate change could serve as a reminder for the town to pick up where it left off, advocates say.

Harrison Bench, a high school senior who is president of the Suffolk Student Climate Action Committee's Sayville Chapter and also sits on Islip Town Environmental Council, told councilors at a Jan. 15 town board meeting that "most" of the 10-year-old climate-change resolution had not been followed.

The resolution, which passed 5-0 in April 2009, specified several ways to combat climate change, including by gathering data on the town's greenhouse gas emissions, reducing carbon emissions, and lowering electricity use by 15 percent by 2015.

Islip Supervisor Supervisor Angie Carpenter did not specifically address the resolution at the meeting,

but said Department of Environmental Control Commissioner Martin J. Bellew is interested in the students' cause and a proposal that could designate Islip a state "Clean Energy Community," making it eligible for grants funding sustainability efforts.

"He is very, very focused on your resolution," Carpenter said. She added her colleagues are "very supportive in moving forward with such a resolution."

The 2009 resolution, which the student group found on the state's Department of Environmental Conservation website, says, "The Town of Islip believes that climate change poses a real and increasing threat to our local and global environments and that it is primarily due to the burning of fossil fuels."

Officials with the state DEC said Islip in 2009 was among the first wave of municipalities to adopt the state's Climate Smart Community pledge, which

recognizes accomplishments in reductions of greenhouse gas emissions that obtain certification and rewards them with grants.

Bench, who met with Islip board members and Bellew last week, said finding the old document was the “extra push in the right direction.”

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“It helps show the direction they were heading in 2009 ... and should be headed in now,” Bench said.

Islip spokeswoman Caroline Smith said the town has followed overarching themes of the 2009 resolution in many ways, including installing energy-efficient lighting in town buildings and continuously replacing vehicles with more energy-efficient models.

The student group is hoping Islip takes more actions and one day becomes a Clean Energy Community by adopting initiatives, such as reporting how much energy is used in buildings and getting training from the state on energy codes.

Melissa Griffiths Parrott, founder and mentor of the Sayville student group, told board members at the January meeting, “We have a piece of paper, but what we want to do is to make action, not just a piece of

paper. But to follow through with the law that was passed in 2009.”

Bellew said the town will work to craft resolutions to get the ball rolling on potentially becoming a Clean Energy Community. He added that environmental control's Deputy Commissioner Greg Hancock will take on the new role of sustainability officer, overseeing projects related to climate change.

Some of what Islip has done so far:

- Marinas have been raised to address rising tides and flooding
- Two green-energy solar farms recently opened in Holbrook and Hauppauge at former landfills. The electricity produced

will be sold to PSEG Long Island to provide clean energy for residents.

Source: Town of Islip

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Antonio Planas joined Newsday in 2018 and covers the Town of Islip. An award-winning reporter and Michigan State University alumnus, he has worked at the Boston Herald and Las Vegas Review-Journal.