

## GREENHOUSE EMISSIONS

# Green upgrade sought for Capitol

*SHARE: Gas plant doesn't mesh with state's 2050 plan*

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Albany

Local environmentalists say plans to revamp the massive heating and cooling as well as power system for the state Capitol building and Empire State Plaza should rely on renewables not natural gas, as currently proposed.

And on Thursday, they offered up a detailed report on how to do that.

"We've done more homework," said Keith Schue, a member of the Sheridan Hollow Alliance of Renewable Energy, or SHARE. "We know there is a better way to do this."

The group released its findings and sent them to state agencies and Gov. Andrew Cuomo's office.

The 36-page document rebuts earlier plans by the New York Power Authority for installing two gas-fired turbines in the Sheridan Hollow facility, a few blocks north of the Capitol/Plaza complex.

Instead, SHARE

believes the state building complex should rely on a combination of geothermal wells, renewable sources such as solar panels and Hudson River water to help cool or heat the buildings, depending on the season.

The report also comes after lawmakers earlier in the year approved stringent goals aimed at making New York's economy free of greenhouse gas emissions by 2050. The plan, which aims to greatly lessen fossil fuel dependence calls for greater use of renewables. And the recent state budget has language appearing to ease an earlier requirement that the overhaul include gas turbines.

The state proposal, called the Sheridan Hollow micro grid, has been in the works for several years. It's part of an evolution of the site that dates to the early 20th century.

Located in a ravine in a largely poor and black neighborhood of Albany, the spot years ago became a symbol of environmental injustice when it housed a trash incinerator that spewed ash. The trash

burning ended in 1994 but the complex still houses the gas-fired system that creates steam to heat the Capitol/Plaza complex through a series of pipes.

The most recent state plan calls for the Power Authority, a quasi-public agency, to operate the gas turbines. They would generate electricity and power the "chillers" that cool water in the steam pipes used for summer cooling. The cost is estimated at around \$88 million, SHARE says.

The plans, though, have been on hold since 2018 as questions about the use of fossil fuels emerged. State officials at that time said they were planning "listening sessions" on possible alternatives.

Schue and others stress that using gas turbines for the state Capitol and Plaza, doesn't comport with the state's goal of weaning off fossil fuels.

Additionally, SHARE believes the "archaic" steam heat system should be scrapped in favor of geothermal heating.

For geothermal heat, pipes would be drilled into the ground, where there is a constant year-round

temperature, and bring up the relative warm air during winter. SHARE also wants the state to tap Hudson River water for temperature regulation, with it being used to chill in summer and warm in winter.

Geothermal is considered a promising new technique for heating homes but the up-front cost is high due to the drilling that is involved.

Still, some institutions including Skidmore College and the under-construction Emerging Technology and Entrepreneurship Complex, or ETEC, building at the University at Albany are employing geothermal heat.

A New York Power Authority statement said it is committed to finding the most affordable, clean and feasible energy options for the plaza. "NYPA has received the report today and it will be reviewed with the teams that are working on solutions for this project," it said.

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