

# Clean Energy webinar: Best time to invest is right now

## Financial incentives, opportunities abound

By ANDREA DECKERT



Schulte

Kevin Schulte doesn't mince words when it comes to whether a business should consider solar energy options.

"Right now, in 2022, is the greatest opportunity to invest in clean energy and clean energy technologies than there

has been in the history of the world," said Schulte, co-founder and CEO of GreenSpark Solar.

Schulte made his comments at the Rochester Business Journal's Clean Energy webinar held March 30. The event was sponsored by Climate Solutions Accelerator of the Genesee-Finger Lakes Region, GreenSpark Solar, Phillips Lytle LLP and Woods Oviatt Gilman LLP.

Schulte was among the panelists who discussed the benefits, opportunities and regulations surrounding clean energy to help businesses decide whether, when and how to make such an investment.

The other panelists were David Flynn, partner at Phillips Lytle; Donald O'Brien Jr., partner at Woods Oviatt Gilman, and Abigail McHugh-Grifa, executive director of the Climate Solutions Accelerator of the Genesee-Finger Lakes Region.

Schulte – whose company is the largest solar installer in Western New York – said there is a slew of financial incentives and opportunities for businesses considering solar power from federal tax credits to the NY-Sun program.

Solar, he said, is "an easy slam dunk investment or use for all businesses in this area," noting its favorable return on investment.

He then cited several examples of projects his firm has completed in the solar



Flynn

business," he said.

Flynn said there can be many economic opportunities when it comes to investing in the clean energy space.

Investments can be made in several ways, including in a community solar model, in property or projects or in emerging technologies, he said.

When it comes to such investments, it's important to stay ahead of the market, in terms of investment and technology, and pay attention to factors including inflationary pressure.

Flynn noted that while some may hold a negative view of clean energies due, in part, to the high up-front costs required, he prefers to look at the many positives associated with it, namely the new markets and opportunities that continue to emerge and evolve.



O'Brien

larger scale renewable energy projects throughout New York.

The state office is dedicated solely to environmentally responsible and cost-effective siting of renewable energy facilities and was established by the Accelerated Renewable Energy Growth and Community Benefit Act in April 2020.

O'Brien noted that the office consolidates the environmental review and permitting of major renewable energy facilities to en-

sure that siting decisions are predictable, responsible and done in a timely manner with input from local governments and host communities.

installation arena, from engineering and manufacturing firms to apartment complexes and universities.

"The investments are here; they're real and they can be done not only on behalf of the climate but on the bottom line of your

sure that siting decisions are predictable, responsible and done in a timely manner with input from local governments and host communities.



McHugh-Grifa

McHugh-Grifa spoke about regional goals around clean energy, and the work of the Climate Solutions Accelerator of the Genesee-Finger Lakes Region.

She said there is a general misconception that clean energy efforts are too expensive. While there are significant up-front costs, she said it makes financial sense overall.

"The payback is significant," McHugh-Grifa said, referring to cost savings, as well as environmental stewardship.

Among the regional needs is a shared understanding of the problems around climate change and a shared vision for change, she noted.

"Climate change is a public health crisis already impacting our region," she said, adding major areas impacting climate change locally include transportation, buildings and agriculture.

Key actions business leaders can take include showing a commitment to clean energy efforts and initiatives, such as getting an energy audit, making a plan that includes external and internal goals and plugging into existing efforts, she said.

To increase awareness of clean energy and its benefits, the Climate Solutions Accelerator of the Genesee-Finger Lakes Region is holding a summit over Earth Day weekend, beginning April 23.

The summit aims to build participants' skills in climate action, advocacy, organizing and leadership, and is targeted at demonstrating the breadth and benefits of climate change solutions in the region.

McHugh-Grifa said there is strong regional support for clean energy and reducing negative impacts on the environment.

"There's a lot of concern in our community and a desire to do something about it," she said.

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