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City of Oneonta Undertakes First Comprehensive Greenhouse Gas Inventory

Results will help city target energy, cost-saving measures

The City of Oneonta has launched its first comprehensive greenhouse gas inventory, with the goal of better understanding the emissions that result from city operations, and targeting emissions reduction measures that can simultaneously save the city money.

The inventory marks the first significant action under the Oneonta 2030 Sustainability Plan adopted by City Council in 2015. Lianna Aharon, a junior at Hartwick college, is leading the inventory effort under the guidance of Education Professor Mark Davies, who also serves as Chair of the City's Environmental Board.

"This is a great example of leveraging the volunteer work of our environmental board members and the bright young people we have at our colleges to help the City achieve its goals. We look forward to using the results of this inventory to inform cost-effective sustainability measures that we can implement in city operations," said Mayor Gary Herzig.

Using models and spreadsheets provided by the state's ClimateSmart Communities program, Ms. Aharon worked closely with City Director of Finance Meg Hungerford to mine the data necessary to quantify the city's emissions. Major sources of emissions include energy use in city buildings, street lighting, and the operation of city vehicle fleets.

"I am excited to see the city embark on the first major step towards creating a more sustainable community. The information that I will help gather and analyze will be greatly useful for the betterment of the City and will act as a starting point for further sustainability efforts. It is rewarding to work on a project that I am passionate about and will also be of practical use for the local community," said Ms. Aharon.

An emissions inventory provides a baseline that can be used to measure the City's progress on emissions reduction measures going forward. Ms. Aharon intends to compare Oneonta's results with other communities across the state, and make preliminary recommendations for where the city can reduce emissions.

The City government emissions inventory is expected to be complete by the end of the summer, and Ms. Aharon will then lead a team of students in completing a city-wide emissions inventory in the fall.