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A 24.9-megawatt solar array on 150 acres on the former Tallgrass Golf Course in Shoreham.

Shoreham solar array launched

Project expected to power up to 3,500 homes

BY MARK HARRINGTON
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The latest wave of large-scale solar energy projects on Long Island got a formal kick-off late last month when a Duke Energy subsidiary announced the launch of a 24.9-megawatt array on the former Tallgrass Golf Course in Shoreham.

The project, developed by Invenenergy and sold to Duke last year, is expected to produce enough energy to power up to 3,500 homes, developers said, while costing ratepayers about \$177 million during its 20-year contract with LIPA. It's been producing power since July.

The 150-acre project, and another on a nearby 60 acres, were both on property formerly owned by DeLalio Sod Farms. Both arrays were con-

tested by some neighbors who were concerned about the impact of the long field of black panels on views and home values.

Brookhaven Town Councilwoman Jane Bonner, a longtime supporter, called the arrays "the most passive use of this property you could ever imagine."

Tax payments from the project are expected to reach up to \$900,000 a year, she said, mostly for the Shoreham-Wading River school district but also the local library and fire departments.

The Invenenergy array, called Shoreham Solar Commons, is Long Island's second-largest, behind Brookhaven National Laboratory's solar farm, but it won't hold the title for long. LIPA has contracted for several more large solar arrays on farmland and other parcels in the Riverhead/Calverton area, including a 36-megawatt project that could be in operation by 2020, said Jim Parmalee, PSEG Long Island's director of power

resources and contract management.

He noted that also could soon be eclipsed, noting, "As the technology develops and with more land available upstate, you'd expect larger projects upstate in the future."

A 20-megawatt project is also planned for Riverhead next year.

Duke Energy Renewables and Distributed Energy Technology, a division of the North Carolina energy conglomerate, is also expected to expand its New York presence after purchasing its first array here, said Rob Caldwell, the company's president.

"It's a great market," he said of Long Island and New York, noting the high demand and the relatively higher prices paid for energy, particularly green energy. "We're looking for a bigger presence" in the state, he said.

Duke already has wind and solar projects in 22 states amounting to about 3,000 megawatts, he said.

Report: Fewer homeless LI vets

BY CARL MACGOWAN
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Long Island has made significant strides in addressing homelessness among its war veterans in recent years, federal officials said Monday.

Mirroring national trends, the number of homeless vets in Nassau and Suffolk counties fell in the past year by 4.25 percent, to 135 from 141, according to figures released by the federal Department of Housing and Urban Development. As recently as 2011, the number of homeless vets on the Island had been 439, HUD officials said.

HUD officials released the figures while announcing the availability of \$245,000 worth of vouchers to help veterans and their families avoid or escape homelessness.

Long Island officials pointed to programs administered by local government and nonprofits to assist veterans who struggle to find affordable homes and adequate employment after they return from war zones.

"Long Island's done a really good job of reducing veterans' homelessness," said Ralph Fasano, executive director of Concern for Independent Living, a Medford-based nonprofit that has developed veterans housing projects in Amityville and Ronkonkoma. "We're at a point now where when veterans are homeless, they don't stay homeless for long."

The voucher program, called Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing, is intended to help veterans and their families pay rent and access support services through the VA. HUD

said 25 vouchers are available to Long Island veterans.

Locally, the program is administered by the Northport VA hospital.

Greta Guarton, executive director of the Long Island Coalition for the Homeless, said the program "allows for veterans that otherwise may not be able to afford housing on Long Island to be able to access appropriate affordable housing."

Babylon Supervisor Richard Schaffer called VASH "a really great program."

"We shouldn't stop until we're down to zero," Schaffer said. "I know we've spent a lot of time not just addressing the issue of homelessness, but addressing the issues of those younger vets who are just getting back from the service and are trying to get back into the workforce."

Nationwide, HUD counted 37,878 homeless veterans, a 5.8 percent decrease from the 40,020 reported last year. Those figures include veterans living in shelters and in "places not meant for human habitation," HUD said in a news release.

In New York State, homelessness among vets declined 1.6 percent, from 1,244 to 1,224, HUD said.

Guarton said that while homelessness among vets has not been wiped out, her group and others have sufficient resources to find homes for service members within 90 days after they lose their homes.

"The amount of housing and resources that we have is enough to assist any veteran who is in need of any housing or assistance," she said. "We're getting closer to zero."



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The housing program is administered by Northport VA Hospital.