

TechCity business manufacturing solar panels

By Mid-Hudson News Network

LAKE KATRINE – Photovoltaic panels have begun to roll off the assembly line at Solartech Renewables on the TechCity campus.

Solartech started manufacturing the panels in late June and expects to produce 55,000 annually with a single assembly line. A second assembly line of equal capacity is in the works and expected to be operational around the end of the year.

About 400 jobs are expected to be created at what's believed to be the only manufacturing facility of its kind on the East Coast.

Todd Roberts, Solartech's chairman and chief executive officer, said "the United States has been a little slower to adopt than some of the European countries and in Japan. We're catching up very quickly. People are predicting a five gigawatt demand in the United States within the next two to three years."

Three years ago, U.S. Rep. Maurice Hinchey, D-Hurley, helped create The Solar Energy Consortium to build a solar manufacturing base in the Hudson Valley.

Hinchey was on hand Monday to welcome Solartech's part in helping to build that base here. "It's critically important, because it's basic and fundamental," said Hinchey, of manufacturing's effect on the region's economy.

"This is significant. The line has been commissioned, and we can actually make a production level product," said Vincent Cozzolino, executive director of The Solar Energy Consortium. Several of our partners have come together to make this happen," he said. "The photovoltaic cells used by Solartech Renewals actually come from our plant in East Fishkill that manufactures those cells and they are called SpectraWatt, so this is a true New York to New York partnership."

A typical house needs about 25 panels to furnish its electrical power needs. New York state wants to gather 100 megawatts of solar energy through an initiative. Solartech can produce about enough solar panels annually to gather 25 megawatts.

Solartech is receiving over \$5 million in benefits from the Empire State Development Corp. and the New York State Energy Research and Development Authority, \$2 million of which will come from funding state Assemblyman Kevin Cahill, D-Kingston, secured in the state budget for bringing solar industries to the Hudson Valley.