



TechCity expects to add 100 solar workers

CRAIG WOLF • POUGHKEEPSIE JOURNAL • JULY 27, 2010

LAKE KATRINE — It was about a year ago that Todd Roberts first heard about Ulster County and TechCity as a possible site for his start-up solar panel plant.

Monday, with production now under way, he showed off Solartech Renewables LLC to two dozen guests, including The Solar Energy Consortium and Rep. Maurice Hinchey, D-Hurley, whom he credited with help in making it happen.

Now, 16 people work making photovoltaic panels that produce power from sunlight. Six are on loan from other companies to help set up, but Roberts expects to add rapidly and grow to about 100 workers based on the first production line. With more investment, more lines can be added and jobs could reach 300, he said.

This is the first American-owned producer of solar panels to open in the eastern U.S., according to Roberts and the consortium, a locally based nonprofit.

Hinchey obtained a federal appropriation of \$600,000 to aid Solartech as part of a \$2.25 million allotment managed by the consortium. A spokesman for Assemblyman Kevin Cahill, D-Kingston, said Solartech will get more than \$5 million in benefits from the Empire State Development Corp. and the state Energy Research and Development Authority, of which \$2 million comes from funding Cahill secured in the state budget for bringing solar industries to the region.

Roberts said the total investment to date is \$10 million from various sources, including private. His own background is as an investment banker and venture capitalist.

Solartech's single production line can produce about 55,000 panels a year, each of which puts out 220 watts in full -strength sun.

Roberts, of New Jersey, said he first heard of Ulster County and TechCity from Vince Cozzolino, co-CEO of the solar consortium, at a trade show. When he visited, he was introduced to a team of helpers from local agencies and governments.

"I was impressed," Roberts said. He has 93,000 square feet of manufacturing space in what was once IBM's Building 5N here.

Solartech's panels use cells made in East Fishkill by SpectraWatt. Solartech's gear was bought from Boston-based Spire Corp.

Hinchey hailed the teamwork aspect of "made in America."

"This partnership, which TSEC (the Solar Energy Consortium) helped foster, will enable them to grow and prosper," he said.

Solartech offers a 27.5-year panel warranty, which it says is the longest it knows of.

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