



ORANGE REVIVAL

AXE: HIRING GERRY MCNAMARA AS SU BASKETBALL COACH WILL GIVE NEW AD BRYAN BLAIR A VESSEL TO RAISE THE MONEY THAT COULD FUEL THE ATTEMPT TO WIN AGAIN. **B1**

SYRACUSE

As state pushes battery tech, towns and neighbors fret over fire risk



Beata Karpinska attended a Syracuse City Council hearing in December to oppose the development of a 10-megawatt battery storage system on East Brighton Avenue. The developer pulled the application from consideration. *Post-Standard file*

Some communities are wary as companies scramble to bring energy storage systems online.

Renee Fox *rfox@syracuse.com*

In recent months, more than a dozen companies have called Salina town officials with similar proposals: Let us install an energy storage system in your town.

"We got calls from 14 companies," said Salina planning director Mark Lafaver. "They want to litter them like popcorn."

The rush to build battery storage systems across Upstate New York is a part of the state's clean energy plan. The effort is backed over the next two decades by \$2 billion in taxpayer incentives for the companies that run them.

The goal, proponents say, is to plop these energy storage units near substations and close to where people live and work. The

giant batteries charge up when the grid has fewer users and has extra power on hand. When more people demand more power, the batteries send the energy back to the grid.

It means they can supply more electricity — enough for as many as 10,000 homes for four hours — during peak hours or bad weather. Overall, the storage systems can lessen the need to create more energy at the source, often the fossil-fueled power plants New York is trying to wean itself from.

Unlike many energy projects, these systems need local approval to come online.

And across Central New York, several communities, including Salina, are pushing pause.

Why? In a word: fires.

The mix of chemicals and power stored inside the systems can combust. One system has caught fire three times down in Orange County, the last time in December. When that happens, the best practice, state and national fire safety experts say, is to let the batteries burn themselves out.

Places like Syracuse, Salina, Lysander and Oswego have approved six-month or yearlong moratoriums on the systems. They say they need time to make sure the batteries are safe and in the right place.

The conversation in Syracuse started after a company proposed putting one along Brighton Avenue near the Outer Comstock neighborhood. Downstate, locals in Ulster and Westchester counties have banned the battery energy storage systems.

But Onondaga County already has more than two dozen of these systems in nine communities, from Skaneateles to Manlius, and including Syracuse. In fact, more than a hundred dot Upstate New York.

Most of the existing ones here are smaller units near power substations. They're used by homeowners, and industrial and commercial businesses.

The companies knocking on Syracuse and Salina's doors want to install much larger units closer to main streets and **SEE BATTERY TECHNOLOGY, A4**

ALBANY

Hochul says the state can't meet its climate targets

Blaming a hostile White House, she argues the 2030 goal is out of reach.

New York Focus

Gov. Kathy Hochul finally unveiled Friday the changes she wants to make to New York's flagship climate law, after months of waffling.

The core of Hochul's proposal is to push back the law's first big deadlines for emissions reductions. The 2019 law requires New York to cut emissions 40% from 1990 levels by 2030. And it required the state environmental agency to issue regulations by the start of 2024 to achieve those cuts.

Hochul's administration failed to do so, and was given an ultimatum of sorts by a judge last October: Issue the rules, or change the law.

Hochul has chosen the latter. She wants



Advocates say Gov. Kathy Hochul is trying to jam through major changes to the climate law behind closed doors with no public input ahead of the April 1 budget deadline. *N. Scott Trimble, strimble@syracuse.com, file*

a seven-year extension on the 2024 deadline — pushing it to the end of 2030 — and wants to link the rules to a new, as yet unspecified emissions target in 2040. She

also wants to revise how the state counts emissions, effectively allowing homes and businesses to burn more gas for longer.

The governor doesn't want to change the original 2030 emissions target in the law, according to a spokesperson. But without rules to enforce it, it would be rendered largely toothless. In an op-ed outlining her proposed changes, Hochul underlined that she considers that original target out of reach.

"We will be dealing with a White House outright hostile toward renewable energy for at least another three years, making it impossible for us to meet our targets without imposing higher costs on homeowners, renters, and businesses," she wrote.

Under Hochul's proposal, the law's most concrete deadline for action would be pushed out past the end of her potential second term as governor.

"This is an attempt to evade accountability for the state to do what is needed to **SEE EMISSIONS, A5**

SYRACUSE

Error frees driver ticketed for three school violations in an hour's time

The issue caused 191 people to get speeding tickets in error.

Greta Stuckey *gstuckey@syracuse.com*

A Syracuse resident thought she was facing serious consequences after receiving three tickets for speeding in a city school zone in less than an hour.

Natasha Senjanovic was looking at paying \$150 in fines for driving over the school-zone speed limit near H.W. Smith School on Salt Springs Road.

She got lucky. It turned out school was closed for a half day, so the tickets were thrown out.

Senjanovic's experience highlights how an administrative error in the city's new school zone camera system led to tickets being issued when school was not in session.

On average in November, the city issued 45 tickets per school day that were reviewed and approved by a city police enforcement officer. Senjanovic's tickets were approved by such an officer.

There were 191 people wrongfully ticketed on Dec. 5, according to Sol Muñoz, a spokesperson for the city. All of those tickets were later voided by the Municipal Violations Bureau, she said.

The city said it has ensured that the vendor operating the cameras has the correct school calendar showing when school is not in session. Muñoz said the problem on Dec. 5 stemmed from an administrative error.

On Dec. 5, Senjanovic, 55, was driving her parents' car when the speed cameras caught her going too fast. She was going 32 mph in a 20 mph school zone.

Within days, three tickets arrived at her parents' house in the mail. When her stepfather saw the tickets, he panicked, worrying the violations could lead to points on his license or even a suspension, since the car is registered in his name.

"My poor stepdad was worried they'll take his license away since each time I was going 10 miles over the speed limit," Senjanovic said.

Senjanovic called the number listed on the ticket to ask whether the violations would affect her license or insurance rates. The person on the phone reassured her that the tickets would not add points or affect insurance because the violations were captured by automated cameras.

Relieved, Senjanovic prepared to pay the \$150 in fines. But a few weeks later, when she tried entering the citation numbers into the city's online payment system, they wouldn't go through. After calling again, she learned the tickets had been voided.

The day she was ticketed was a half day for Syracuse schools, and the tickets were issued around 12:50 p.m., 12:55 p.m. and 1:35 p.m., after school had already been **SEE SPEEDING TICKETS, A4**

OSWEGO COUNTY

Development plan

A planned sewer line to be built into the southern part of the county will open 30,000 acres for development expected with the arrival of Micron. **A3**

LIFE

Good cringe

"The Book of Mormon" creators use comedy to treat gay conversion, violence against women and myths about AIDS to hold our feet to the fire. **C1**

