

Press



Release

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For Immediate Release

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Wolfe's New Task Force Targets Food Waste Effort Seeks To Feed People, Not Landfills

New City, NY (Aug. 5, 2015) – Rockland County Legislature Chairman Alden H. Wolfe plans to create a task force to explore ways to reduce food waste for the benefit of hungry neighbors, taxpayers, local businesses and the environment.

"It's a tragedy that in Rockland County in 2015, people go hungry," Wolfe said. "What's truly unforgivable is that people are hungry amidst out-of-control food waste."

As much as 40 percent of the American food supply goes to waste annually, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

Relief agencies estimate that more than 10 percent of Rockland's 315,000 residents go to bed hungry or without knowing where their next meal is coming from.

"There are so many opportunities when it comes to food recovery, everything from preventing waste on the kitchen table to reducing organics sent to landfills," Wolfe said. "I feel that bringing together a group of concerned and knowledgeable citizens is the best way to tackle this challenge."

Wolfe's task force plan follows two successful information sessions that focused on the EPA's Food Recovery Challenge and brought together anti-hunger advocates, business owners, farmers, representatives of the EPA and the DEC, and others.

The EPA's program aims to reduce food waste and in the process, help shrink costs for businesses, reduce municipal use of landfills and provide food to hungry residents.

Kimiko Link, an EPA Region 2 environmental scientist, said participation in the Food Recovery Challenge was voluntary and open to businesses, organizations, governments and individuals.

"Food waste is the single largest and least recovered waste stream in the U.S.," Link said. "It's really low-hanging fruit because if we put our heads together and just connect the dots, it would be something that is relatively straightforward to recover."

The program works by making sure all food is measured so that it gets managed, Link said.

With a big push towards organics diversion, the state hopes to reduce the amount of food waste New Yorkers dispose of each day from about 4 pounds per person per day to about half-a-pound per person per day in the next 15 years, said Terry Laibach, Region 3 recycling specialist for the state Department of Environmental Conservation.

The state plans some financial help and technical assistance in the fight against food waste, with Gov. Andrew Cuomo citing the problem during the kick off of his "Capital for a Day" tour last month.

Laibach said multi-agency programs involving the DEC, NYSERDA, Empire State Development and others, along with partnerships with the EPA, will work toward solutions.

Wolfe organized the information summits after he visited local food programs and identified food waste as an issue. He will soon name the members of the new task force.

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