

CASE STUDY



FROM INTERVENTION TO IMPACT:

*How Westchester Leaders Navigated the Utility Process
for an Energy Affordability Win*

PREPARED BY CLIMATE MAYORS | JUNE 2026



TABLE OF CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY.....	3
THE CHALLENGE: PROTECTING COMMUNITY MEMBERS FROM ENERGY RATE HIKES.....	4
THE STRATEGY: POWER IN NUMBERS.....	5
THE SETTLEMENT: A VICTORY FOR PARTNERSHIP.....	7
LESSONS LEARNED FOR CLIMATE MAYORS.....	9
CONCLUSION.....	12
RESOURCES.....	13
CITATIONS.....	15

Cover photo credit: Thomas @ Adobe Stock



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

How 40 Westchester communities reshaped the Con Edison rate case

In 2025, faced with an impending energy affordability crisis for residents and small businesses in their communities, a coalition of 40 municipalities across southeast New York formed the Westchester Municipal Consortium (WMC). They came together to intervene in a major Consolidated Edison (Con Edison) rate case on behalf of their communities, which included more than 1 million residents.

Led by Mayor Shawyn Patterson-Howard of Mount Vernon, NY, and Mayor Nicola Armacost, Former Mayor of Hastings-on-Hudson, NY, the WMC successfully championed community concerns and negotiated a settlement that dramatically reduced the utility's proposed rate hikes. The intervention prevented double digit rate increases for electric and natural gas and secured commitments to ongoing cooperation and transparency with Con Edison.

On January 22, 2026, the Public Service Commission (PSC) issued the "Order Adopting Terms of A Joint Proposal and Establishing Electric and Gas Rate Plans,"¹ codifying the consortium's victory and establishing a utility and regulatory engagement model to build regional unity, expand transparency, and strengthen consumer protection.

From double-digit hikes to a 2.8% increase

How 40 Westchester communities reshaped the Con Edison rate case

CON EDISON PROPOSED

Electricity **13.4%**
annual increase

Natural gas **19%**
annual increase

NEGOTIATED OUTCOME FOR 2026

Electricity **2.8%**
annual increase

Natural gas **2.0%**
annual increase

Power in numbers

The Westchester Municipal Consortium united 40 municipalities and 1M+ residents to intervene in the Con Edison rate case — for under \$5,000 per community.

Source: Climate Mayors case study, June 2026 · NYPSC Order adopted Jan 22, 2026



THE CHALLENGE: PROTECTING COMMUNITY MEMBERS FROM ENERGY RATE HIKES

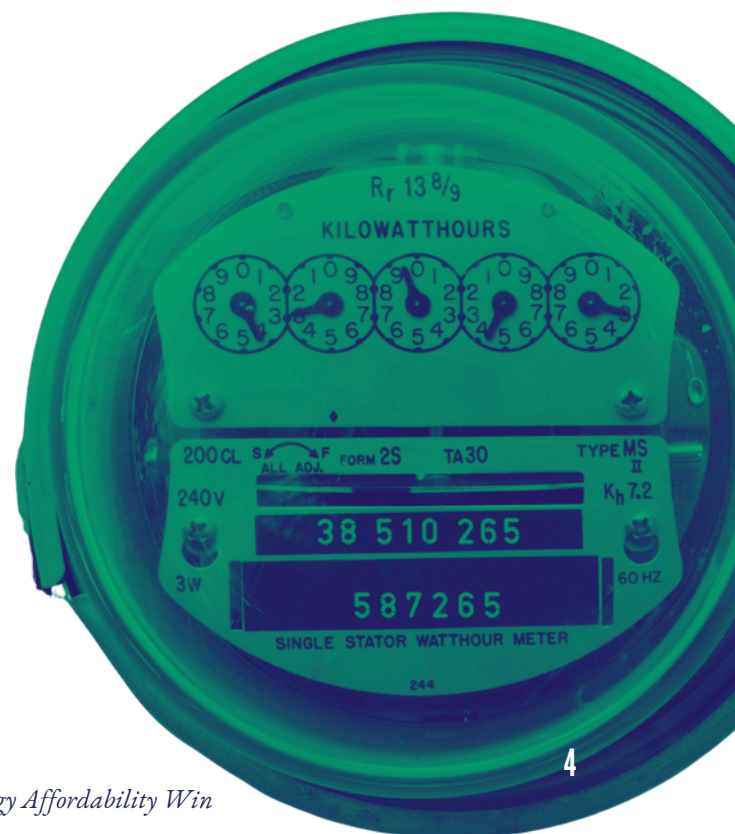
In January of 2025, Con Edison proposed a three-year rate increase from January 1, 2026, through December 31, 2028. **The request, if approved, would have increased annual electricity rates by 13.4% and natural gas rates by 19%.²** The utility argued that the rate increases were necessary to improve system reliability, fund critical infrastructure upgrades, and meet state and local climate and clean energy goals.

Con Edison's utility service area spans Westchester County and all five boroughs of New York City, serving over 3.6 million electric and 1.1 million natural gas customers. The rate increase request provided limited transparency on how the costs and benefits of the proposed increases would be allocated across the utility's customer base.

Utility bills are now the fastest driver of inflation, and over 80 million Americans struggle to pay their bills.³ In New York City and Westchester County, at least 416,598 Con Edison residential customers are behind on their bills by at least 60 days, totaling more than \$889 million.⁴ Because of this, residents must choose between rent, transportation, healthcare, or keeping their lights on and their homes at safe temperatures.

Rising utility bills have contributed to power disconnections for over 100,000 Con Edison Customers, compounding daily hardships.⁵

Con Edison's proposed rate increases were not the first, following a series of rate hikes approved over the previous three years, which saw rates spike by as much as 20%.⁶ Recognizing the outsized impact these rate increases would have on their communities, municipal officials in Westchester County intervened in the rate cases on behalf of their constituents.





THE STRATEGY: POWER IN NUMBERS

While New York City had long been represented in prior Con Edison rate cases, Westchester communities were largely underrepresented. Recognizing the limited influence each community could exert on its own, the village administrator of Rye Brook, Chris Bradbury, elevated the rate case to the Westchester Municipal Officials Association (WMOA) Executive Committee, then chaired by Mayor Shawyn Patterson-Howard of Mount Vernon. WMOA officials agreed that their communities could no longer withstand the compounding forces of rising utility rates and Con Edison's underinvestment.

In April of 2025, 40 WMOA member communities joined forces to form the Westchester Municipal Consortium (WMC), a new partnership with the express purpose of supporting intervention in the Con Edison rate case. The WMC retained legal representation to support their interests before the New York State Public Service Commission (NYPSC). As formal intervenors, the consortium gained access to detailed filings, cross-examined the proposals, submitted evidence, and participated in confidential settlement negotiations. The WMC represented an unprecedented level of partnership and coordination, as highlighted below.

Unified Advocacy to Scale Local Impact

Under Mayor Patterson-Howard's leadership, the consortium mobilized local governments spanning various sizes, political affiliations, economic conditions, and social demographics to build consensus. Through a series of early strategy discussions, followed by monthly meetings, the members of the consortium identified common unifying themes important to every community. Themes included maintaining energy affordability, increasing transparency, and fostering ongoing coordination of utility planning and implementation. Working together, the communities accessed legal and technical

resources necessary to best represent their concerns with strong credibility before Con Edison, the NYSPPC, and other intervenors.

Cost Sharing to Maximize Impact

Intervention in the rate case was made possible through shared investment in legal services. Mayor Patterson-Howard shared, "Our communities wanted to see us lead on this issue. As individual communities, we didn't have the money to do it alone, so we rallied and recruited, and we were able to get the cost down for each community to less than \$5,000." By sharing costs, each community achieved many of its desired outcomes while demonstrating prudent investment of taxpayer dollars.





Grounding Discussions in Human Impact and Energy Burden

Grounding communications in affordability became central to the consortium's efforts. The WMC conducted a rate analysis across residents, ultimately confirming cost inequities compared to NYC customers. This supported negotiations of additional rate reductions and cost protections for Westchester customers.

By centering storytelling, members of the consortium connected the impact of Con Edison's proposed rate increases directly to the challenges facing residents. Through a multipronged communications strategy, WMC communities fostered dialogue with residents. They helped translate the often exclusionary process and complex jargon of regulatory proceedings, emphasizing how the rate case connects to global, national, and local factors influencing the proposed rate increases. The engagement strategy paid off, with communities seeing increased support for local leaders to take action on their behalf.



"I am so proud of our municipal leaders who have come together to fight these proposed hikes. While we understand and support investment in infrastructure and green energy advancements, we do not support the lack of transparency and increasing profit margins on the back of those who can least afford it."

**Mount Vernon Mayor
Shawyn Patterson-Howard**



Improving Transparency and Utility Coordination

Throughout the rate case, the WMC advocated for increased transparency and coordination among utilities. For too long, Westchester County communities had been excluded or underinvested in, and this rate case presented an opportunity to change that outcome.

An independent analysis identified costs associated with undergrounding electrical lines and service equipment in Manhattan. The study found that costs were unfairly allocated to ratepayers in Westchester County, where the majority of distribution service lines are above ground. The analysis also identified Con Edison's underinvestment in distribution infrastructure and equipment in Westchester County. While the settlement did not directly resolve this issue, it led to the establishment of a monitoring process between Westchester County communities and Con Edison, including regular meetings.

THE SETTLEMENT: A VICTORY FOR PARTNERSHIP

Following negotiations between Westchester Municipal Consortium, Con Edison, and other intervenors in the proceedings, the parties reached a settlement agreement in November 2025. Con Edison agreed to stronger coordination and transparency and significantly reduced the proposed rate increases for Westchester customers, limiting the impact on consumers and protecting energy affordability. Con Edison and the NYPSC are committed to ongoing coordination and transparency through 2028, the remainder of the rate period. Under the settlement, Con Edison will be required to make dozens of filings throughout the course of the rate period.



“There is no doubt that Westchester’s municipalities banding together had a substantial impact on the results. This collaboration ensured our communities were heard at the state level and will continue to give us a voice in how utility investments are made in Westchester.”

NICOLA ARMACOST

**Former Mayor of Hastings-on-Hudson and current President
of the Westchester Municipal Officials Association**



Formally adopted by the NYPSC on January 22, 2026, the Joint Proposal establishes a three-year rate plan. Key commitments secured by the Consortium from Con Edison include:

Drastic Revenue Reductions

The settlement agreement, which runs January 1, 2026, through December 31, 2028, significantly reduced the impact of utility bills on Con Edison customers across Westchester County. Electric rates will see a drastic reduction from initial proposals, increasing by only 2.8% for 2026. Gas rates will see an even smaller increase at only 2.0%. The agreement includes similar annual increases of approximately 2.8% for electric and 2.0% gas in 2027 and 2028. The settlement does not include reductions in utility delivery charges, an issue the WMC and WMOA will work to address over the next several years.

Operational Accountability

The utility will hold annual capital project meetings to review capital project plans, solicit feedback, and adjust capital investment based on community input. The utility must also conduct an analysis comparing the costs of underground networking systems for NYC customers with

those of the overhead networking systems in Westchester to prevent cross-subsidization by Westchester ratepayers. Operational accountability will also be monitored, including new requirements for reporting on double-pole removal (removal of old, no longer-in-use poles), street lighting repairs, and storm preparedness.

Climate and Affordability

The settlement requires Con Edison to meet Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act (CLCPA) goals, including achieving a zero-emission grid by 2040, and supporting statewide greenhouse gas emissions reduction goals of 40% by 2030 and 85% by 2050. They must also maintain commitments to building decarbonization, electrification, and methane leak detection and reduction. Finally, the settlement expands the Enhanced Energy Affordability Program (EAP)⁷ to protect low-income customers from displacement by investments required to comply with state clean energy transition requirements.



Climate and Affordability

The settlement requires Con Edison to meet New York Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act (CLCPA) goals, including achieving a zero-emission grid by 2040, and supporting statewide greenhouse gas emissions reduction goals of 40% by 2030 and 85% by 2050. They must also maintain commitments to building decarbonization, electrification, and methane leak detection and reduction. Finally, the settlement expands the Enhanced Energy Affordability Program (EAP) to protect low-income customers from displacement by investments required to comply with state clean energy transition requirements.



LESSONS LEARNED FOR CLIMATE MAYORS

Westchester Municipal Consortium's engagement in the Con Edison rate case provides a blueprint for municipal leaders nationwide. Direct engagement, especially through joint action, can shift the outcome of utility regulatory proceedings. WMC built momentum, mobilized support, and enabled the participating communities to achieve outcomes that would otherwise have been unlikely through separate interventions or no intervention at all. Summarized below are the major lessons learned and key considerations for mayors seeking to increase engagement with their utilities and regulators to advance community goals and protect constituents from rising costs.



LESSONS LEARNED FOR CLIMATE MAYORS



Aggregation is Power: By banding together and pooling resources, communities can challenge multi-billion-dollar utilities and make sure their voices are heard.

Key Considerations for Mayors:

- Leverage existing regional municipal organizations to identify shared challenges and build partnerships.
- Consider creating a formal, limited-scope partnership to intervene directly.
- Pool funds to create cost efficiencies and contract with subject matter experts, including independent legal counsel and expert witnesses.
- Develop a coordinated communications and engagement plan.
- Be consistent with the process: establish regular check-ins up front and adjust as needed to align with the regulatory timeline.

Finding Compromise and Establishing Long-Term Credibility

Key Considerations for Mayors:

- Establish short and long-term goals that the entire group can agree on.
- Create a list of shared, non-negotiable priorities.
- Pursue strategies that keep local governments at the table after plans are adopted.
- Keep track of negotiated concessions to address in future proceedings.
- Conduct ongoing monitoring to verify compliance with the terms of the agreement or order.

“If the win comes at the cost of compromise, then the pendulum swings too far in the opposite direction. Embrace moderation, and find where you are willing to meet in the middle.”

**Mount Vernon Mayor
Shawyn Patterson-Howard**



“During these challenging economic times, controlling the overhead families must face on a monthly basis is one of our top priorities. Joining together with our neighboring communities, we have made significant strides in preventing these exorbitant rate increases. We will continue to work with the Westchester Municipal Consortium on issues that affect all of us.”



**Cortland Town Supervisor
Richard Becker.⁸**

Demand Transparency and Cooperation:

The WMC’s success was rooted in the demand for ongoing coordination and infrastructure investments that meet their communities’ needs affordably, reliably, and sustainably.

Key Considerations for Mayors:

- Leverage outside experts to verify utility data, modeling, and cost allocation methodologies.
- Negotiate data sharing, transparency, and reporting requirements.
- Identify community-specific investment needs and opportunities upfront and be willing to ask for them.
- Strengthen relationships with your utilities, state regulators, and elected officials.
- Leverage existing and new communications channels to amplify local voices both as formal intervenors and through informal media opportunities.

Achieve Equitable Climate Action:

The settlement proved that achieving climate goals and maintaining energy affordability are not mutually exclusive; goals can be achieved without bankrupting the most vulnerable residents.

Key Considerations for Mayors:

- Ensure local goals and objectives are clearly outlined and understood by the utility and regulators.
- Identify where state, utility, and local goals are aligned or unaligned.
- Independently verify cost-benefit analyses conducted by the utility and other stakeholders.
- Collect both formal and informal feedback from residents and businesses to understand how energy costs affect their overall budgets.
- Identify community stories that demonstrate impact to include in testimony, written comments, or other informal communications.



CONCLUSION

Westchester Municipal Consortium demonstrated that meeting climate and clean energy goals while achieving fair and affordable outcomes for communities are not mutually exclusive. While trimming the utility's return on equity, the consortium protected CLCPA funding and ensured that Westchester ratepayers will now receive more equitable outcomes.

Westchester Municipal Consortium demonstrated that partnerships among local governments can build momentum, enable communities to pool resources, share legal and technical expertise, and unify legal standing. These types of partnerships show that local governments are impactful stakeholders in utility regulatory proceedings, ensuring the voices of their communities are represented in a historically complex and exclusionary forum.

As the rate plan moves into implementation over the next several years, members of the WMC are committed to translating the valuable lessons learned from this rate case into additional actionable outcomes to advance energy affordability for their constituents. The focus now shifts to lowering gas and delivery charges, monitoring the plan's implementation, and ensuring Con Edison follows through on its promised local investments, including support for building climate and energy resilience, expanding energy-efficiency programs for low-income and vulnerable community members, and investing in community clean-energy projects.





RESOURCES

Climate Mayors, our partner organizations, and other leading organizations supporting utility and regulatory engagement offer a wealth of resources to help your community get started. Included below are some of those resources.

Climate Mayors

- Issue Brief: [Utility Engagement Briefing for Mayors: Tackling Energy Burden](#)
- Resource: [Data Centers and the Climate Landscape: An Actionable Resource for Mayors](#)

Powerlines

[PowerLines](#) aims to lower utility bills while growing our economy. By engaging with the people, policies, and processes that shape utility regulation, PowerLines is pushing for an energy system that better serves American consumers and communities.

- Report: [Utility Spending is Rising: A Review of Utility Capital Expenditure Plans](#)
- One-Pager: [Utility Bills are Rising 2025 One-Pager](#)
- Report: [Utility Bills Are Rising: 2025 Review](#)
- Polling Research: [Most Americans report higher electricity, gas bills compared to a year ago](#)

World Resource Institute

[World Resources Institute](#) hosts several webinars, articles, and cohorts that can support local government engagement in utility and regulatory proceedings, especially for city staff focused on energy, sustainability, and climate change.

- [Power Moves: Local Government Strategy for Utility & PUC Collaboration](#)
- [Utility Rate Cases 101: How Local Governments Can Address Rising Electricity Prices](#)



Institute for Market Transformation

Institute for Market Transformation (IMT), helps create better buildings by bridging the needs of business, government, and communities.

- General resources for utility and regulatory engagement: IMT: Utilities and the Grid
- Publication in partnership with NARUC: Local Government Engagement with Public Utility Commissions Mini Guide
- Webinar and Publication: Participating in Power: Making Utility Regulation Accessible

Regulatory Assistance Project

Regulatory Assistance Project (RAP) works to accelerate the transition to a clean, reliable, and efficient energy future.

- RAP Knowledge Center
- The Essential RAP U.S. Library
- Electricity Regulation in the US: A Guide

Local Government Sustainable Energy Coalition

The Local Government Sustainable Energy Coalition (LGSEC) is a California-based statewide membership network representing local government interests related to clean energy and climate resilience at the state regulatory level.

CONTACT

Jessica Stoll Lowery at jessica@climate-mayors.org
for more information and resources



CITATIONS

^[1] https://docs.publicnow.com/viewDoc?filename=40885%5CEXT%5C00A6B2BB7D70F55B15C3AA4532248EDCAFB18F6C_01896E0798F0ACCC55B575437733E99415D48DE6.PDF

^[2] <https://ryebrookny.gov/westchester-municipal-consortium-achieves-major-accomplishments-in-con-edison-rate-case-settlement/>

^[3] https://powerlines.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/02/0202_PL_Q4-One-Pager.pdf

^[4] <https://www.therecorder.org/post/county-state-officials-demand-con-ed-rate-freeze-1>

^[5] <https://www.therecorder.org/post/county-state-officials-demand-con-ed-rate-freeze-1>

^[6] <https://www.dobbsferry.gov/home/news/westchester-municipalities-was,form-consortium-oppose-con-edison-rate-hike>

^[7] <https://www.coned.com/en/accounts-billing/payment-plans-assistance/energy-affordability-program>

^[8] <https://westfaironline.com/economy/early-reaction-to-the-con-ed-rate-hike-agreement>