

July 13, 2021

Dear Mr. Diorio, Mr. Lamphere and the Town Planning Board,

We have a few questions and concerns related to the proposed Skunk Hill Road Solar Project:

One of the most important issues we would like to draw your attention to is an area that didn't seem to get any attention during the applicant's presentation on July 7th: the 'chokepoint' on the southern Gordon property (plat 18 lot 8) where it narrows to about 65ft in width between plat 18 lot 9I and our property, plat 18 lot 7. Our understanding is that the same 100ft construction setback requirements apply to a road construction as the panels. If this isn't correct, what, if any, regulations apply to this area? With a required 20ft wide road, this would lead our lot, and plat 18 lot 9I, to have barely more than 20ft of setback to the new road if it were placed dead center on the Gordon lot. This is even more problematic because this same area is in and right next to wetlands, which necessitates the use of overhead power lines (as written in the project proposal), which will require extensive clearing and trimming of trees. This will further reduce the minimal buffer between the roadway and the abutting properties. We are strongly opposed to any variance that would reduce the setback protections between our lot and the proposed construction.

In addition to this chokepoint, this proposed project is shoehorned on nearly all sides against minimum setback requirements for rivers, streams, and wetlands. Most of those drain from the Skunk Hill solar lots and onto our property via a year-round river, two intermittent streams, and shared wetlands (essentially, the entirety of our border with the southern Gordon property - over 1000' long - is a shared wetland area). Based on the diagrams included in the preliminary stormwater management plan, the direction of flow for everything will ultimately be the wetlands and river on our property, the latter of which currently requires a bridge crossing to access our home. We understand that the minutiae of a stormwater management plan isn't within the purview of master plan approval, but we want to impress upon the Planning Board the importance of getting it right as the process goes on, as our ability to even access our home safely depends on it. We are extremely concerned about this in relation to the effectiveness of stormwater management as construction gets underway, as the project ages, and as it reaches its end-of-life. 25 years from now, when the panels are removed and saplings are planted, will the town be taking over maintenance of the stormwater systems until the replanted forest achieves some level of maturity? Additionally, with all the deforestation, road construction, retention ponds, and drainage paths, we worry about what negative impacts may come to the wetlands and waterways themselves with so many changes to the way water will be draining into them from the surrounding lands. One specific point we were hoping to hear about in the presentation from the applicant is the year-round river that runs just a few dozen feet to the east of the chokepoint in the Southern Gordon property. On the Gordon property, this river is at least 10ft wide and a foot deep nearly year-round, and in rainy or snowy seasons it can be significantly wider and closer to 2ft deep. The current atv/jeep path that accesses the Gordon property fords the river, meaning a bridge or very significant culvert will have to be constructed to accommodate the new access road.

Another concern is the visibility of the final construction. The Town Council's decision to rezone the lots on this proposal included the requirement that no abutting houses will be able to see solar panels from a first floor window. Based on the maps provided, we believe we will be able to see the panels throughout the fall/winter/spring period when leaves are down along the southern end of the south-most solar field, to the west of the drainage overflow labeled P-184.

Finally, we would like to share our opinion that the scope and scale of this project runs counter to the town's comprehensive plan and rural character. This project would deforest 30% of a heavily wooded area in an otherwise relatively dense residential area of town and will potentially compromise the wetlands that make up the vast majority of the remaining wooded areas, all of which seems directly at odds with the goal of protecting the town's natural resources. We are strong advocates for renewable energy, but cutting down a large forest in almost 100 residents' backyards for a commercial scale solar power facility is not what we believe the comprehensive plan allows for.

Thank you for your consideration,

Greg and Brittany Ahnrud - 11 Grancera Dr, Hope Valley