

PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION

196 North Main Street, Southington, CT 06489
(860) 276-6248



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August 27, 2020

State of Connecticut
Connecticut Siting Council
10 Franklin Square
New Britain, CT 06051

Re: Public Comment on Southington Solar One, LLC Petition
1012 East Street, Southington, CT 06489

Dear Siting Council Members:

I am writing this correspondence as a Notice of Public Comment in my capacity as the Town Attorney of Southington, as well as, a representative of the Planning and Zoning Commission of Southington. I would like to voice concerns that some of our Town representatives asked me to express over the Petition of Southington Solar One, LLC and their plans to install roughly 19,000 solar panels and associated equipment across roughly 26.4 acres of farmland located at 1012 East Street in Southington, CT. The lot contains a total of approximately 102.45 acres designated for Farmland Status by the State of Connecticut.

The concerns stem from the proposed location of the solar panel project as its location is currently used as a working farm. The Town would ideally prefer Southington Solar One to pursue an alternate location for this project, most notably not on the limited usable precious farmland that is left in Southington. The Town of Southington, through their Farm Heritage Committee, Open Space Committee and Planning & Zoning Commission have made farmland preservation a strategic priority in the Town's current plan of conservation and development. The solar installation will take prime farming acreage out of agriculture for decades with no surety that the land will return to that capacity in the future. Simply inviting sheep onto the land does not protect the prime agricultural soils. The Town is concerned that a significant portion of the mitigation strategies to be employed by the Applicant are plotted to occur on land currently under lease to a third party (the tenant farmer) and over which it has no control.

Other concerns with Southington Solar One's latest petition, dated July 29, 2020, focus on the additional removal of trees and plants, concerns of noise, reflections off the solar panels affecting neighborhood houses, and the destruction of prime farmland soil.

If the Siting Council decides to approve the project at its current proposed location, at a minimum, the Town would request that stipulations would be included in the approval to address the concerns outlined above, including, but not limited to, the following: the planting of pollinator-friendly plants to rejuvenate the soil in between and around the panels, that no additional trees be cut down or removed from their current location, additional buffer trees be planted and noise screening be erected to eliminate, or limit, the noise and glare impact on the surrounding neighborhood and the nearby Metacomet Hiking Trail.

I appreciate your consideration of the concerns that have been expressed in this letter. Please feel free to reach out to my office if any further information or clarification is needed.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'J. Taylor', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Jeremy Taylor, Esq.
Town Attorney

cc. Keith Ainsworth, Esquire
Robert Hammersley, P & Z Chair
Robert Phillips, Director of Planning
Paul Chaplinsky, Town Councilor
Mark Sciota, Town Manager