

# CERTIFIED COPY

STATE OF CONNECTICUT  
CONNECTICUT SITING COUNCIL

**LSE SERPENS LLC (LODESTAR ENERGY)  
APPLICATION**

The following pages are representative of the  
Comment Session of a public hearing, before Elisa Ferraro,  
Court Reporter, License 233, via Teleconference on  
Thursday, June 5, 2025, commencing at 6:30 p.m.

HELD BEFORE: JOHN MORISSETTE, Presiding Officer of  
Connecticut Siting Council

1 A P P E A R A N C E S:

2 VIA ZOOM

3  
4 CONNECTICUT SITING COUNCIL  
10 Franklin Square  
5 New Britain, Connecticut 06051

6 Members:

7 Brian Golembiewski  
8 Quat Nguyen  
9 Michael Perrone  
Chance Carter  
Bill Syme

10 Staff:

11 Melanie Bachman, Esquire  
Dakota LaFountain

13 FOR THE CITY OF TORRINGTON:

14 Murtha Cullina  
265 Church Street  
15 New Haven, Connecticut 06510  
16 BY: BRUCE McDERMOTT, ESQUIRE

17 FOR THE APPLICANT:

18 Pullman & Comley  
90 Statehouse Square  
19 Hartford, Connecticut 06103  
20 BY: LEE HOFFMAN, ESQUIRE  
BY: LIANA FEINN, ESQUIRE

21 Applicant Panel Members:

22 Jeff Macel, Sam Valone, Matthew Sanford, Michael Gagnon

1 [On the record 6:30 p.m.]  
2  
3  
4

5 PUBLIC COMMENT SESSION  
6  
7

8 VICE CHAIRMAN MORISSETTE: Ladies and  
9 gentlemen, this hearing is called to order this  
10 Thursday, June 5, 2025 at 6:30 p.m. My name is  
11 John Morissette, Vice Chair of the Connecticut  
12 Siting Council. Other members of the Council  
13 are Brian Golembiewski, designee for  
14 Commissioner Katie Dykes of the Department of  
15 Energy and Environmental Protection; Quat  
16 Nguyen, designee for Marissa Paslick Gillett of  
17 the Public Utilities Regulatory Authority;  
18 Chance Carter and Bill Syme.

19 Members of the staff are Executive  
20 Director Melanie Bachman; Siting Analyst  
21 Michael Perrone and Administrative Support  
22 Dakota LaFountain.

23 If you haven't done so already, I ask that  
24 everyone please mute their computer audio  
25 and/or their telephones now. This is a  
continuation of the public hearing that began  
at 2:00 p.m. this afternoon. A copy of the  
prepared agenda is available on the Council's

1 website, along with a record of this matter,  
2 the public hearing notice, instructions for  
3 public access to this public hearing and the  
4 Council's Citizens Guide to Siting Council  
5 Procedures. This hearing is held pursuant to  
6 Provision Title 16 of the Connecticut General  
7 Statutes and of the Uniform Administrative  
8 Procedure Act upon an application from LSE  
9 Serpens LLC, also known as Lodestar Energy, for  
10 a certificate of environmental compatibility  
11 and public need for the construction,  
12 maintenance and operation of a 3.0-megawatt AC  
13 solar photovoltaic electric generating facility  
14 and associated equipment on 13 parcels located  
15 south of West Hill Road in Torrington,  
16 Connecticut and its associated electrical  
17 interconnection. The complete application was  
18 received by the Council on April 7, 2025. The  
19 Council's legal notice of the date and time of  
20 this public hearing was published in the  
21 Republican American on April 19, 2025. Upon  
22 this Council's request, the applicant erected a  
23 sign in the vicinity of the proposed site as to  
24 inform the public of the name of the applicant,  
25 the type of facility, the public hearing date,

1 contact information for the Council, which  
2 includes the website and phone number. This  
3 public comments session is reserved for members  
4 of the public who signed up to make brief  
5 statements. These limited appearance  
6 statements are not subject to questions from  
7 the parties or the Council. And members of the  
8 public making statements may not ask questions  
9 of the parties or the Council.

10 In accordance with the public hearing  
11 notice and in fairness to everyone who has  
12 signed up to speak, these public statements  
13 will be limited to three minutes. Please be  
14 advised that written comments may be submitted  
15 by any person within 30 days of this public  
16 hearing. I wish to note that parties and  
17 interveners, including representatives,  
18 witnesses and members are not allowed to  
19 participate in the public comments session. I  
20 also wish to note that those who are listening  
21 and for the benefit of your friends and  
22 neighbors who are unable to join us for the  
23 public comments session that you or they may  
24 send written comments to the Council within 30  
25 days of the date hereof by mail or by email.

1       Please be advised that any person may be  
2       removed from the public comments session at the  
3       discretion of the Council. We ask each person  
4       making a limited appearance statement in this  
5       proceeding to confine his or her statements to  
6       the subject matter before the Council and to  
7       avoid unreasonable repetition so that we may  
8       hear all of the concerns you and your neighbors  
9       may have. Please be advised that the Council  
10      cannot answer questions from the public about  
11      the proposal. A verbatim transcript will be  
12      made of the hearing. It will be deposited in  
13      the Torrington City Clerk's office for the  
14      convenience of the public.

15       At this time, I request the applicant to  
16      make a brief presentation to the public  
17      describing the proposed facility. Sam Valone,  
18      I understand you're going to make a  
19      presentation this evening.

20       MS. VALONE: I am, yes. Can you hear me  
21      okay?

22       VICE CHAIRMAN MORISSETTE: We can. Thank  
23      you.

24       MS. VALONE: The site plan on the screen.  
25       Perfect. Thank you. I'm Sam Valone. I'm a

1 project developer at Lodestar Energy and LSE  
2 Serpens, the applicant, is an affiliate of  
3 Lodestar. Lodestar is a solar developer and  
4 owner/operator. We're based in West Hartford,  
5 Connecticut and we have projects operating  
6 across the Northeast, about 40 operating  
7 projects. This specific project here that  
8 we're talking about is West Hill Road in  
9 Torrington, Connecticut. Thank you all for  
10 coming tonight and listening.

11 We are proposing a fixed solar array just  
12 south of West Hill Road. It will connect to  
13 Eversource's existing distribution system and  
14 the entire array area will encompass about  
15 19.2 acres, including the array, the fence, the  
16 stormwater basins, the utility poles. Inside  
17 the fence is just the solar panels and  
18 equipment pad 16.5 acres and the total property  
19 is 41 acres. Lodestar -- one of Lodestar's  
20 affiliates will be purchasing the property.  
21 Just looking a little more at the site plan, if  
22 you start from the access on West Hill Road,  
23 we're going to be putting in an access road  
24 that goes south. There will be five utility  
25 poles that we'll be putting in to connect to

1 Eversource distribution system. And the access  
2 road will lead down on the westerly side of the  
3 array and go down toward the equipment pads,  
4 which are towards the south of the property.  
5 The array is 3-megawatts total fixed system.  
6 There is a stormwater basin proposed on the  
7 south and some other swales to help with the  
8 drainage patterns, as well as a smaller basin  
9 up top towards West Hill Road.

10 A few important things to note is there is  
11 one wetland on the property that's way to the  
12 west and we are well cleared of it, over  
13 300 feet from it. There's a gas pipeline on  
14 the property near to the east of that and not  
15 touching the gas easement. And then generally,  
16 I think this site is great for solar. It's  
17 going to be low visibility. The array is very  
18 set back from the road. We're putting in  
19 screening so evergreen tree plantings next to  
20 utility poles to help reduce visibility, as  
21 well as at the top of the array to shield it  
22 from nearby residences. Solar is a quiet  
23 neighbor, very little traffic after  
24 construction. You don't have people coming in  
25 and out. And it's also just important to note

1 that this property before Lodestar came into  
2 the picture was going to be a residential  
3 subdivision, which it would have been 13  
4 residential lots and required a lot of tree  
5 clearing and city resources. Lodestar came  
6 along and we thought solar would be a less  
7 impactful way to use the land. So thank you  
8 for listening. That's a brief summary of the  
9 project and we welcome any public comments.

10 VICE CHAIRMAN MORISSETTE: Thank you Ms.  
11 Valone. We will call on Jim Bobinski to make a  
12 public statement, followed by Mary Grening.

13 Mr. Bobinski.

14

15 MR. BOBINSKI: Good evening everyone. My  
16 name is Jim Bobinski and my wife Maura and I  
17 are the owners of the property on West Hill  
18 Road. And I have been a longtime resident of  
19 Torrington for over 50 years. I have over 30  
20 years of design experience in the land planning  
21 and development industry. I strongly believe  
22 that a solar project is the best possible use  
23 for this site, far better than the alternative,  
24 which was previously approved as a residential  
25 subdivision. A housing development would

1 increase traffic, place additional pressure on  
2 city services like schools and roads. In  
3 contrast, solar is low impact, clean and  
4 sustainable. It supports the state's long-term  
5 environmental goals without putting strain on  
6 community resources. This particular site is  
7 already being used for an energy  
8 infrastructure. An existing underground  
9 northeastern gas transmission line runs through  
10 and splits the property in half. This project  
11 is really a natural and minimal expansion of  
12 its already existing energy use. One of the  
13 many important aspects of this project includes  
14 stormwater management upgrades that will  
15 improve current site conditions. Rather than  
16 increasing runoff or erosion, the solar  
17 installation will use vegetative ground cover  
18 and engineered drainage to better manage water  
19 on site. From a community standpoint, solar is  
20 also an excellent neighbor. It doesn't create  
21 noise, pollution or daily traffic. Once built,  
22 the facility is quiet and passive. It simply  
23 sits in place and produces clean energy.  
24 There's a huge contrast to a residential  
25 development, which would bring vehicular

1 traffic and noise to the area. The project is  
2 also designed with significant setbacks from  
3 the road and low visibility, meaning it will be  
4 largely out of sight and inconspicuous to the  
5 surrounding area. Financially, this project  
6 would bring up to \$40,000 a year in tax revenue  
7 to the town. That's meaningful income that  
8 will help support existing schools, road  
9 infrastructure and help with public safety. I  
10 want to emphasize how positive the experience  
11 has been working with Lodestar, the solar  
12 developer. They have been great to work with,  
13 responsive, thoughtful and community focused.  
14 They've always spoken with the planning board  
15 and the mayor multiple times, listening  
16 carefully to feedback and making adjustments to  
17 align with local priorities. This has been a  
18 true partnership from the start for me and my  
19 family. Thank you.

20 VICE CHAIRMAN MORISSETTE: Thank you,  
21 Mr. Bobinski. We will now call on Mary  
22 Grening, followed by Marshall Cohen. Mary  
23 Grening please.

24  
25 MS. GRENING: Hi, I'm Mary Grening. I'm a

1 homeowner on West Hill. We own -- my family  
2 owns the property on the other side of the  
3 pipeline. And I don't believe land should be  
4 cleared for any reason. I understand that it  
5 was originally slated for residential, but it  
6 hasn't gone through. Mainly, the clearing of  
7 19.2 acres of land that they call core forest,  
8 I think that's going to have a very big impact  
9 on the wetlands, the people, air and water  
10 quality. I wasn't really reassured that these  
11 studies -- they didn't really go into much  
12 detail. I know that the trees clear the carbon  
13 monoxide from the air. I feel that it's going  
14 to be an eyesore and safety when you drive down  
15 the road. I go on the road all the time. And  
16 I thought they mentioned something about fire  
17 and that the hydrant was about 3,000 feet away.  
18 There's been a lot of droughts and I'm  
19 concerned that the solar panels would cause a  
20 fire and it's very close to the property line.  
21 And I think this equipment is going to be  
22 visible and that's also going to be an eyesore.  
23 But I'm also concerned about the noise. You're  
24 saying now that there's no noise but during the  
25 meeting, they said there would be noise, they

1 run during the day as long as there's daylight.  
2 So that means, what, till nine o'clock there  
3 may be noise? And I work from home so that  
4 would impact me. I think that they said they  
5 didn't really reach out to Tennessee gas  
6 pipeline. I'm not sure if I understood that  
7 one correctly. But I also do think it's going  
8 to have an impact on the wildlife. They keep  
9 mentioning bats and butterflies which is good  
10 that they want to protect those. But what  
11 about the other animals like bears? We have a  
12 bear issue around here. Bears do travel on  
13 your property. I can see that only increasing.  
14 But there's also a lot of birds too that live  
15 in the dense forest. And I'm hoping that, you  
16 know, the animals just won't be displaced. I  
17 do wonder why they have to clear out land and  
18 why they can't choose say a parking lot which  
19 other people have suggested in the past. And I  
20 just feel also there's too many solar projects  
21 in Torrington. I'm not sure why Torrington  
22 needs another solar project. And basically  
23 that's all I have to say. Thank you.

24 VICE CHAIRMAN MORISSETTE: Thank you, Miss  
25 Grening. Thank you for coming out this

1                   evening. I'll call on Marshall Cohen, followed  
2                   by David Draper. Marshall Cohen please.

3                   MR. COHEN: Yes, thank you. Can you hear  
4                   me?

5                   VICE CHAIRMAN MORISSETTE: Yes, I can.  
6                   Thank you.

7  
8                   MR. COHEN: Okay. I have been a longtime  
9                   resident of the City of Torrington and I care  
10                   deeply about this community and it's not just  
11                   where I live, it's where I work, have been  
12                   raised and built connections. Over the years,  
13                   I've seen how solar energy plays a key role in  
14                   strengthening our local economy. For example,  
15                   solar has directly benefited my real estate  
16                   business. In many cases, landowners find that  
17                   their land isn't highly valuable for  
18                   traditional sales or they aren't interested in  
19                   turning it into a large scale residential  
20                   development. Solar projects offer a smart  
21                   sustainable alternative, providing landowners  
22                   with steady income while helping preserve the  
23                   character of their land. It's not just about  
24                   real estate value, it's about giving people a  
25                   meaningful option to use their land in a way

1 that supports both their financial goals and a  
2 long-term health of the community. I've had  
3 the opportunity to work with Lodestar before  
4 and I can confidently say they are an excellent  
5 company, responsible, professional and  
6 genuinely committed to making sure their  
7 projects bring real positive impact to the  
8 towns they work in. They are thoughtful  
9 partners who listen to community concerns and  
10 work hard to ensure that their projects fit  
11 well with the local environment and the local  
12 values. Beyond the local benefits, we all know  
13 that Connecticut needs more solar. We need it  
14 to modernize our grid, meet our clean energy  
15 goals and secure a more reliable resilient  
16 energy future. The demand for clean renewable  
17 power is only growing. And if we want to be  
18 part of that future, if we want to build a  
19 stronger more sustainable state, we need  
20 projects like this one. I appreciate the  
21 allowed timeframe for stating my comments into  
22 the public record. Thank you.

23 VICE CHAIRMAN MORISSETTE: Thank you,  
24 Marshall. We will call on David Draper,  
25 followed by Clarice Johnson. David Draper

1 please.

2

3 MR. DRAPER: This is David speaking. Can

4 you hear me?

5 VICE CHAIRMAN MORISSETTE: Yes, I can.

6 Thank you.

7 MR. DRAPER: Excellent. Thank you,

8 Council, for the opportunity to speak. This

9 application raises substantial doubt about

10 adverse environmental effects caused by the

11 site. And the specific issue I'd like to speak

12 about today is the failure to adequately

13 consider adverse effects -- excuse me, on West

14 Hill Lake. West Hill Lake, which is also known

15 as West Hill Pond, is a 245-acre water body and

16 shoreline located about six-tenths of one mile

17 east of this site. The lake has one of the

18 highest water ratings in the state and it

19 provides substantial wildlife habitat as well

20 as public recreation. The problem here is by

21 failing to consider the impact on the lake, the

22 applicant's environmental assessment is flawed

23 because it was unduly narrow in scope. In my

24 limited time, I'd like to highlight two items

25 of deficiency as examples. As the first, the

1 applicant failed to consider both emissions and  
2 noise pollution to the lake during each phase  
3 that is of site construction, continuing  
4 operation and decommission. This is because  
5 the environmental and the acoustic studies  
6 considered at best only the immediate site area  
7 itself and failed to consider the eastward  
8 vehicle impacts along West Hill Road in the  
9 area that directly abuts West Hill Lake.  
10 Importantly, this route that is traversing West  
11 Hill Road along the lake is the only eastbound  
12 route directly servicing the site, but this  
13 impact on the lake was not considered. Second,  
14 the applicant failed to consider the ecological  
15 impact on the lake. The applicant's  
16 environmental study consider at best impacts to  
17 wildlife only at the site itself; however, it  
18 failed to consider collateral effects,  
19 including impacts to the West Hill Lake  
20 ecosystem due to disruption to species  
21 identified as potentially present at the  
22 proposed site, including bird species which may  
23 also frequent West Hill Lake and its shoreline.  
24 The collateral impact of the lake ecosystem was  
25 not considered. These, to me, are significant

1           issues of importance to our local environment  
2           and to the community. So for at least these  
3           reasons, I would respectfully urge the Council  
4           to give substantial fact finding weight against  
5           the applicant. Thank you.

6           VICE CHAIRMAN MORISSETTE: Thank you,  
7           David. We'll continue with Clarice Johnson,  
8           followed by Andy and Lauren Matheson. Clarice  
9           Johnson please.

10  
11           MS. JOHNSON: I'm Clarice Johnson, a  
12           neighbor of the property. I believe that there  
13           were 12 homes projected to be built and that  
14           was four to six acres of property for each  
15           home. And I just don't believe there would be  
16           that many trees taken down as there would be  
17           for this project. And also, the mention of  
18           fire, I believe there is a site in Winsted that  
19           was hit by lightning and has never been brought  
20           back up into service. So my question also  
21           would be, I know you don't answer them, but how  
22           many of these solar fields are not even working  
23           that are out there? And also, what is done  
24           with these solar panels when they're no longer  
25           in use? Is there a plan to take them out? Are

1       they buried in the ground? To me, this is not  
2       green energy when you're clearcutting almost  
3       20 acres of forestry. It seems to me that you  
4       could find a cleared area to put solar panels  
5       in. Also, there was mention about a lot of the  
6       animals, but what about the plants also? I did  
7       find, which I haven't seen in years, but I do  
8       know that a lot of people have found them this  
9       year, is Lady's Slippers. I found one on that  
10      property. I did take photos of both homes that  
11      are by that in the background to prove that the  
12      Lady's Slippers there. The electric power,  
13      does it even stay in Connecticut or does it go  
14      outside the state? Are we benefiting from this  
15      at all? Also, the EMF from the solar panels  
16      themselves and the electricity, the  
17      electromagnetic fields, how does that impact  
18      our health of the neighborhood, people living  
19      around this solar panels? Is my time up? Just  
20      that the ecosystem is just going to be -- it's  
21      totally disrupted. And we are close to a  
22      watershed area, which I know that was addressed  
23      today, but there's tons of wet area back there.  
24      I'm there all the time. I have horses that I  
25      ride that property. I just am not for it.

1           Thank you.

2           VICE CHAIRMAN MORISSETTE: Thank you,  
3           Clarice. We will now move to Andy and Lauren  
4           Matheson, followed by Steven Thompson. Andy  
5           and Laurie Matheson -- Andy and Lauren  
6           Matheson. Excuse me. Andy and Lauren  
7           Matheson. We'll come back. Hopefully they'll  
8           join us.

9           We will move to Steven Thompson, followed  
10          by Katherine Wheeler. Steven Thompson please.

11          MR. THOMPSON: Good evening everybody.  
12          Can you hear me?

13          VICE CHAIRMAN MORISSETTE: Good evening.

15          MR. THOMPSON: My name is Steven Thompson.  
16          I'm a local farmer, business owner in  
17          Torrington, Connecticut. We grow vegetables  
18          and also have a large sheep farm. We raise  
19          sheep. And we're actually subject matter  
20          experts because we're leading the agrivoltaics,  
21          no pun intended, in the state, which is dual  
22          use agriculture. A lot of this property is  
23          being sold for housing development or it's  
24          going to solar. Some of it is forested like  
25          this, not used and clear it and use it for good

1 purposes versus agricultural land which then is  
2 transitioned to solar field, no problems with  
3 that. What I do is put sheep on that property  
4 and I actually work with these solar companies  
5 to employ me and set up commercial mowing to  
6 graze sheep on the property bringing it back to  
7 agricultural use. So we can raise bees on it,  
8 we can graze sheep on it and actually bring  
9 dual use production into this land, which is  
10 awesome. This particular company I'm working  
11 with on a site in Winchester/Winsted on Platt  
12 Hill Road and we're putting sheep up there this  
13 summer to be grazing up there. I'm already  
14 grazing sheep at Torrington at the site on East  
15 Pearl Road, next to the sporting complex. I  
16 spend a lot of time on these solar sites. I've  
17 been to all different kinds of them. I've  
18 raised sheep. I've bought these solar sites.  
19 There's a lot of misconception out there about  
20 solar and about these different things. I'll  
21 address some of them. First off, these solar  
22 sites can only be put in certain areas based on  
23 the transmission lines that are capable of  
24 carrying the energy. So these solar sites  
25 aren't just finding random spots, they're very

1 limited to where they can choose. That's why  
2 it's not just parking lots. And when it can  
3 be, they do use those. If you look at the  
4 company's history, they've got them in all  
5 different kinds of areas. I'm also a huge  
6 proponent of freedom. And freedom for property  
7 owners to use their property how they want. If  
8 it's not your property, there's kind of not in  
9 my backyard attitude where they don't want it  
10 there. It's not your property. And if someone  
11 is telling you you can't do something on your  
12 property, you should consider that as well.  
13 Most of these sites have a decommission plan at  
14 the end of 30 years where they are brought back  
15 into a natural state and they can be farmed  
16 again. On these solar sites, there's an  
17 abundance of wildlife. Birds love solar. I'm  
18 there all the time. The birds flourish  
19 underneath the panels. And I think you would  
20 be shocked how much of a wildlife sanctuary  
21 these can become. As far as noise goes, based  
22 on this site, I don't think you will have any  
23 noise problems at all because of where the  
24 inverters are located. As far as EMF health  
25 issues, the EMF spectrum is visible light, it's

1 cell phones, it's everything. If you're not  
2 affected by those, you're not going to be  
3 affected by this. It's very low EMF signature.  
4 There's no health issues. As far as the lake  
5 goes, there's going to be no issues with the  
6 lake. That's all I have for time. Thank you  
7 very much.

8 VICE CHAIRMAN MORISSETTE: Thank you  
9 Steven. I'll call upon Katherine Wheeler,  
10 followed by John and Katherine Mendela.  
11 Katherine Wheeler please. Katherine Wheeler?  
12 Katherine Wheeler? Okay.

13 We will move on to John and Katherine  
14 Mendela. Mendelas please. The Mendelas  
15 please. John and Katherine Mendela? Okay,  
16 let's go back to Andy and Lauren Matheson.  
17 Have they joined us?

18 MR. MATHESON: Yes. We have nothing to  
19 add at this time.

20 VICE CHAIRMAN MORISSETTE: Thank you,  
21 Andy. Katherine Wheeler? Katherine Wheeler?  
22 John and Katherine Mendela. Have the Mendelas  
23 joined us? Okay.

24 Then that concludes our public comment  
25 session for this evening. The Council

1 announces that it will continue the evidentiary  
2 session of this public hearing on Tuesday,  
3 July 22, 2025 at 2:00 p.m. via Zoom remote  
4 conferencing. A copy of the agenda for the  
5 continued evidentiary hearing session will be  
6 available on the Council's website, along with  
7 the record of this matter, instructions for  
8 public access to the evidentiary hearing  
9 session and the Council's Citizens Guide to  
10 Siting Council's Procedures. Please note that  
11 anyone who has not become a party or intervenor  
12 but who desires to make his or her views known  
13 to the Council may file written statements to  
14 the Council until the public comment period  
15 closes. Copies of the transcript of this  
16 hearing will be filed at the Torrington City  
17 Clerk's office.

18 I hereby declare this hearing adjourned  
19 and thank you everyone for your participation.  
20 Have a good evening.

21 [Public Comment Session of Hearing Adjourned at 7:01 p.m.]

22  
23  
24  
25

1 STATE OF CONNECTICUT

:  
2

: CHESHIRE

3 COUNTY OF NEW HAVEN

:  
4

I, Elisa Ferraro, LSR, and Notary Public for the  
5 State of Connecticut, do hereby certify that the  
6 preceding pages of the Siting Council's public hearing  
7 comment session were stenographically recorded by me on  
8 Thursday, June 5, 2025, commencing at 6:30 p.m.

I further certify that I am not related to  
9 the parties hereto or their counsel, and that I am not  
10 in any way interested in the events of said cause.

12 Dated at New Haven, Connecticut, this 17th day  
13 of June 2025.



14 \_\_\_\_\_  
15 Notary Public

17 My Commission Expires: December 31, 2026.

18 License No. 233

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