

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

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

VIA ZOOM

**CONNECTICUT SITING COUNCIL
10 Franklin Square
New Britain, Connecticut 06051**

Members:

**Brian Golembiewski
Quat Nguyen
Michael Perrone
Chance Carter
Bill Syme**

Staff:

**Melanie Bachman, Esquire
Dakota LaFountain**

FOR THE CITY OF TORRINGTON:

**Murtha Cullina
265 Church Street
New Haven, Connecticut 06510
BY: BRUCE McDERMOTT, ESQUIRE**

FOR THE APPLICANT:

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

Applicant Panel Members:

Jeff Macel, Sam Valone, Matthew Sanford, Michael Gagnon

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

2
3 PUBLIC COMMENT SESSION

4
5 VICE CHAIRMAN MORISSETTE: Ladies and
6 gentlemen, this hearing is called to order this
7 Thursday, June 5, 2025 at 6:30 p.m. My name is
8 John Morissette, Vice Chair of the Connecticut
9 Siting Council. Other members of the Council
10 are Brian Golembiewski, designee for
11 Commissioner Katie Dykes of the Department of
12 Energy and Environmental Protection; Quat
13 Nguyen, designee for Marissa Paslick Gillett of
14 the Public Utilities Regulatory Authority;
15 Chance Carter and Bill Syme.

16 Members of the staff are Executive
17 Director Melanie Bachman; Siting Analyst
18 Michael Perrone and Administrative Support
19 Dakota LaFountain.

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

14
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 intervener
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.

9 I further certify that I am not related to
10 the parties hereto or their counsel, and that I am not
11 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

16
17 My Commission Expires: December 31, 2026.

18 License No. 233
19
20
21
22
23
24
25