



STATE OF CONNECTICUT  
*CONNECTICUT SITING COUNCIL*

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**VIA ELECTRONIC MAIL**

April 7, 2021

TO: Service List, dated March 9, 2021

FROM: Melanie Bachman, Executive Director *MAB*

RE: **PETITION NO. 1444** - CP NB Solar I, LLC and CP NB Solar II, LLC petition for a declaratory ruling, pursuant to Connecticut General Statutes §4-176 and §16-50k, for the proposed construction, maintenance and operation of a 1-megawatt AC solar photovoltaic electric generating facility and a 0.97-megawatt AC solar photovoltaic electric generating facility located at 127 Forest Road in North Branford, Connecticut, and associated electrical interconnection.

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Comments have been received from the Connecticut Department of Agriculture on April 6, 2021. A copy of the comments is attached for your review.

MB/emr

c: Council Members



# STATE OF CONNECTICUT DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Office of the Commissioner



Bryan P. Hurlburt  
Commissioner

860-713-2501  
[www.CTGrown.gov](http://www.CTGrown.gov)

April 5, 2021

Melanie A. Bachman  
Executive Director  
Connecticut Siting Council  
10 Franklin Square  
New Britain, CT 06051

Re: PETITION NO. 1444 - CP NB Solar I, LLC and CP NB Solar II, LLC petition for a declaratory ruling, pursuant to Connecticut General Statutes §4-176 and §16-50k, for the proposed construction, maintenance and operation of a 1-megawatt AC solar photovoltaic electric generating facility and a 0.97-megawatt AC solar photovoltaic electric generating facility located at 127 Forest Road in North Branford, Connecticut, and associated electrical interconnection.

Dear Executive Director Bachman:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the above referenced Petition for Declaratory Ruling. This project is to be located on an approximately twenty (20) acre parcel of land at 127 Forest Road in North Branford. The developers state that the limits of disturbance are approximately ten (10) acres, all of which are to take place within the area of prime farmland on the property, the land on the property that would be of the highest quality for cultivating crops.

The loss of Connecticut farmland negatively impacts our efforts to combat food insecurity, increases the importation of human food and animal feed from outside of our state, and results in a larger carbon footprint. Well managed agricultural lands can store significant carbon and will play an important role in climate change mitigation.

In addition to taking agricultural lands out of production, impacts from this solar project include disturbances to the farmland caused by the use of heavy equipment, such as: holes drilled to install metal support posts, trenching for electrical conduits, surface grading, and the construction of access roads and equipment pads. These manipulations and changes have an adverse impact on the upper 24 inches of the soil which are critical to plant growth and will have negative consequences for any future agricultural productivity.

Prime and important farmland soils are recognized federal, state and locally significant natural resources, and through its adoption of Public Act 17-218, our legislature has formally acknowledged the importance of these resources. While aspects of this public act do not directly affect this petition, the Department of Agriculture believes it is important to document and make part of the record our concerns about the impacts this project will have on farming and agriculture.

The Department of Agriculture has the following recommendations to the siting council:

- 1) The siting council should investigate whether the project could be located elsewhere on the property (in whole or in part) to minimize impacts to prime farmland. Since the disturbance limits of the proposed project are to be on only about half of the property, alternative configurations should be considered that would allow for no disturbance of the most valuable farmland on the parcel.
- 2) The siting council could also consider looking to the developers of this project for other options that would serve to lessen the project's impacts to agricultural resources. Examples of these options include the following measures:
  - a. Plan the project's structural design in a way that might allow for cultivation of crops within the project footprint.
  - b. Permit livestock in and around the solar project area.
  - c. Provide pollinator habitat and/or apiary space.
  - d. Provide space for a community garden area.
  - e. Provide dedicated acreage for use by new farmer(s).
  - f. Reduce the overall footprint of the project through a more efficient design.

While we can appreciate the fact that this project will participate in the virtual net metering program, with an agricultural end user (the Page Farm) as the "Host Customer," the loss of quality farmland in an active agricultural community, without consideration of alternatives to offset that loss, is of significant concern to our agency. Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this project. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact either myself, or Stephen Anderson in our Resource Conservation Unit. Steve can be reached at [Stephen.anderson@ct.gov](mailto:Stephen.anderson@ct.gov) or (860) 713-2592.

Sincerely,



Bryan P. Hurlburt  
Commissioner

Cc: Katie Dykes, Commissioner  
Department of Energy and Environmental Protection