



TOWN OF EAST WINDSOR

FIRST SELECTMAN JASON E. BOWSZA

September 6, 2023

Connecticut Siting Council
c/o Melanie Bachman, Esq.
Executive Director
10 Franklin Square
New Britain, CT 06051

Re: Petition 1572, East Windsor Solar Two

Honorable Members of the Connecticut Siting Council,

Please accept these written comments submitted by the Town of East Windsor pertaining to Petition 1572 – East Windsor Solar Two, LLC petition for a declaratory ruling.

As you may recall, the East Windsor Board of Selectmen and the Planning and Zoning Commission jointly submitted a letter to the Connecticut Siting Council (“the Council”) in September of 2021 stating the Town’s collective position on the continued subsummation of farmland to facilitate additional grid scale solar projects (attached). In that correspondence, the Town noted an abundance of already-sited projects consuming considerable farmland in a town that takes great pride in its agricultural heritage and feel. The Town also requested that no further grid-scale projects be approved on farmland or forestland within the community.

Several years ago, there was an effort to decentralize the siting of landfills and trash-to-energy facilities away from urban centers, citing environmental justice concerns around the adverse effects of those facilities in only a few municipalities. Now, the same phenomenon is happening, only this time to a small handful of rural municipalities being required to host renewable energy projects, against our will. This time, the voices crying out for relief are not coming from urban centers, but rather from small towns that have had enough.

Regrettably, another grid-scale project is now before the Council for your consideration. The Town asks that the comments submitted to the Siting Council in September of 2021 be considered.

In addition,, there are significant areas of concern with Petition 1572. While we recognize that local jurisdiction does not apply to the work of the Council, the Town asks that the Council consider the East Windsor Plan of Conservation and Development (POCD). In that document, the Town clearly lays out that the “rural, village, agricultural and business character that define

East Windsor must be preserved to keep the Town an attractive place to live, work and play.”¹ The plan further says that “residential and village area development must be carefully guided to ensure compatibility with community character (*emphasis added*) and allow East Windsor to prepare for the impacts of future growth and age populations. Economic development must be retained and expanded to support the community with services, jobs, and taxes, while remaining sensitive to the community’s environment and quality of life (*emphasis added*)².

In light of the Town’s comments from September 2021, and the conditions established for the overall vision for East Windsor’s future in the POCD, there are legitimate concerns that Petition 1572 fails to consider the cumulative impact of these developments on the greater community. It is understood that grid-scale solar projects will result in a long-term loss of farmland and open space, and impact community character and streetscapes. In fact, the project as proposed would directly disrupt the Town’s scenic road loop³, affective viewsheds along that loop and the aesthetics of the historic village of Windsorville.

Beyond the clear conflicts between the project and the Town’s POCD, noise is a concern as well. The applicant was responsible for the development of East Windsor Solar One (Petition 1426) that has resulted in pervasive noise issues affecting abutting property owners. The Town submitted correspondence to the Council in December of 2020, March of 2021, and March of 2023 raising concerns about the impact of East Windsor Solar One on farmland and on abutting property owners. The upshot of those concerns is that noise remains a pervasive problem in a residential area, unmitigated, and consumption of farmland has presented a significant deterioration of the rural landscape. No meaningful mitigation factors were employed by the applicant to address the concerns of the Town, and Petition 1572 seeks to further compound these issues. In summary, the track record of the applicant’s work in the community is poor, and should be a heavily weighted factor in terms of any further petition approvals.

The Town has been working collaboratively with concerned citizens who have raised other, valid concerns regarding the siting of this project, including but not limited to further erosion of farmland, stormwater runoff, groundwater contamination, toxins, fire hazards, aesthetic degradation, and more.

Finally, according to the Citizen’s Guide to Siting Council Procedures document issued by the Connecticut Siting Council, the Council itself notes that your “jurisdiction is limited to hearing applications presented to it; *the Council has no planning function* (*emphasis added*). This puts a finer point on the need to consider local factors such as cumulative effect on host communities when siting grid-scale solar facilities. Municipalities do have planning functions, most obviously found in local Plans of Conservation and Development. While local jurisdiction concerning the approvals of these projects may not apply, the work done regularly to develop and implement these POCDs should be strongly considered by the Council when determining cumulative effect on host communities.

¹ Town of East Windsor 2016 Plan of Conservation and Development, pg. 2

² *ibid*

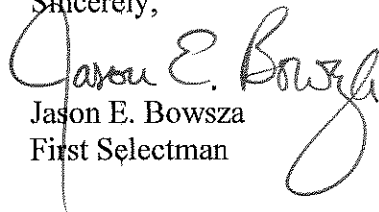
³ POCD, page 22

Because of these factors, and others, the Town is requesting that the declaratory ruling for the process be denied and that the process for a full certification of environmental compatibility and public need be imposed. Furthermore, CGS §16-50p requires, as part of the certification process, that the Council consider “the environmental impact of the facility alone *and cumulatively* (*emphasis added*) with other existing facilities, including a specification of every significant adverse effect, including but not limited to, (i) electromagnetic fields that, whether alone or cumulatively with other effects, impact on, and conflict with the policies of the state concerning the natural environment, (ii) ecological balance, (iii) public health and safety, (iv) scenic, historic and recreational values, (v) agriculture, (vi) forests and parks, (vii) air and water purity, and (viii) fish, aquaculture and wildlife.”⁴

The Town further restates our position of September 2021 – that we have done our part as citizens in Connecticut towards large-scale renewable energy projects, and that, especially when taken cumulatively, further siting of these projects in East Windsor is not warranted or appropriate.

Thank you for your consideration of these concerns, submitted on behalf of the Town of East Windsor.

Sincerely,


Jason E. Bowsza
First Selectman

⁴ Connecticut General Statute 16-50p(3)(B)

BS 9/16/2021

TOWN OF EAST WINDSOR

FIRST SELECTMAN JASON E. BOWSZA

September 21, 2021

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

Dear Attorney Bachman,

Please accepted this letter as an affirmation of the perspective of the Town of East Windsor's Board of Selectmen and Planning and Zoning Commission pertaining to the future siting of grid-scale solar development projects in the Town of East Windsor.

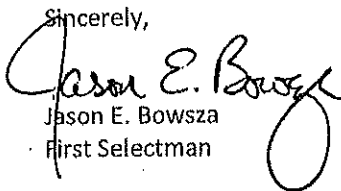
The Town is aware of the state's efforts to achieve a goal of forty percent (40%) renewable energy sold in Connecticut by 2030¹, and one hundred percent (100%) carbon neutrality by 2040². We are also aware of the state's long-term goal to preserve one hundred and thirty thousand (130,000) acres of prime farmland. We support these goals, although we recognize that due to the nature of the parcels preferred by solar developers, they may well conflict with each other.

As you know, East Windsor will be the host community for the largest grid-scale solar development in New England once Gravel Pit Solar comes online in 2023. Based on information publicly available on the Connecticut Siting Council's website, East Windsor will be host to more than one hundred and thirty-eight (138) megawatts of generation. That equates to more than twenty-five percent (25%) of the total sited generation to date. East Windsor has certainly done our part to help reach the state's established goals.

We respectfully request that no further grid-scale projects be approved on farmland or forestland in the Town of East Windsor, and we believe that ample opportunity exists elsewhere to still meet our goals. We would support the siting of solar generation on rooftops, highway medians, or over-excavated gravel pits.

Thank you for your consideration of our request.

Sincerely,


Jason E. Bowsza
First Selectman



Anne Gobin
Chair, Planning and Zoning Commission

Cc: Board of Selectmen
Planning and Zoning Commission

¹ <https://portal.ct.gov/PURA/RPS/Renewable-Portfolio-Standards-Overview>

² <https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/Office-of-the-Governor/Executive-Orders/Lamont-Executive-Orders/Executive-Order-No-3.pdf>