

STATE OF CONNECTICUT
CONNECTICUT SITING COUNCIL

LSE Scutum LLC and LSE Bootes LLC (Lodestar Energy) petition for a declaratory ruling, pursuant to Connecticut General Statutes §4-176 and §16-50k, for the proposed construction, maintenance and operation of a 1.93-megawatt AC solar photovoltaic electric generating facility located at 141 Town Farm Road, and Parcel Nos. 86-326 and 86-164, Abbe Road, Enfield, Connecticut, and associated electrical interconnection.

PETITION NO. 1611

MAY 9, 2024

PRE-FILED TESTIMONY OF KAREN LAPLANTE

Q. Please state your name, relationship to the Town of Enfield, and your business address.

A. My name is Karen LaPlante. I am the Chair of the Enfield Agricultural Commission and a Member, and Vice Chair, of the Enfield Conservation Commission. I live at 166 N Maple Street, Enfield. I submit this pre-filed testimony on behalf of the Town of Enfield and its residents.

Q. In what ways does the Enfield Agricultural Commission serve the Town of Enfield?

A. The Agricultural Commission is responsible for protecting and preserving the agricultural properties of Enfield for future generations. The commission assists farmers with the Farmland Preservation Program and the Community Farmland Preservation Program. The Commission serves as a resource to assist local Enfield Farms with preserving and protecting their land as well as assisting with other areas, like Farmland

Restoration, available grants for farms, promoting tax reduction opportunities within the town and connecting farmers with other farm resources available in Connecticut.

Q. Why is the preservation of farmland important to Enfield and its residents?

A. The Enfield farmlands are some of the most vital in Connecticut, given they are comprised of prime soils. These farms have been responsible for producing numerous crops for the benefit of Enfield residents and other citizens of Connecticut throughout the region, going back hundreds of years.

Q. Does the Agricultural Commission also work with other organizations to promote farm viability and farmland preservation?

A. Yes. The Agricultural Commission has sponsored two regional summits and has worked with NRCS, Department of Agriculture, UCONN, the CT Farm Bureau and other organizations to promote programs for farmers. Farmland Preservation information has been available through the CT Farmland Trust and through the American Farmland Trust.

Q. Has the American Farmland Trust addressed issues related to using farmlands for solar purposes?

A. Yes. The Trust has issued Smart Solar Guiding Principles to save farmlands. A copy of those guiding principles is attached as Exhibit A.

Q. What role does the Enfield Conservation Commission play regarding Enfield Farmlands?

A. Among the goals and responsibilities of the Commission are the preservation of farmlands in Enfield. The Commission works with the Agricultural Commission, the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection and the Department of

Agriculture to preserve open space and promote Farmland Preservation.in our programs we present to farmers and citizens during our summits and public programs.

Q. Is it fair to say that as a commissioner on both the Enfield Agricultural Commission and the Enfield Conservation Commission you oppose the Lodestar project proposed for Town Farm Road?

A. Although I personally installed 28 ground mounted solar panels in my yard in 2009, and I support solar in the right place, I do oppose this project on prime farmland and believe there are better places solar can be installed in Enfield.

Q. Why?

A. This farmland site has been farmed for generations, going back to the Abbe family for whom the adjacent road is named. It is undisputed that the property contains prime soils for farming, and the use of the property for a solar array is inconsistent with the best use of the land. This site is next to farms already protected with development rights owned by the Connecticut Department of Agriculture. Enfield farmers have been preserving farms since 1983 through this program, with the farm right next door preserving over 63 acres in 2002. Total farming acres preserved to date is almost 1337 acres. We don't have an unlimited supply of land available for farming and providing food for our citizens, we must preserve these prime farmland soil farms for the future generations.



Karen LaPlante

STATE OF CONNECTICUT)
) ss: Enfield
COUNTY OF HARTFORD)

Then and there personally appeared Karen LaPlante who subscribed the foregoing testimony and who swore to or affirmed the truth of the statements contained herein before me, the undersigned authority on this 8th day of May, 2024.

Kenzy Lee

Notary Public
~~Commissioner of the Superior Court~~


 Kenzy Lee
Notary Public, State of Connecticut
My Commission Expires March 31, 2027



EXHIBIT A



SEPTEMBER 22ND, 2022 BY LORI SALLET

American Farmland Trust Releases *Smart Solar*SM Guiding Principles to Save the Land that Sustains Us

Growing Renewable Energy While Strengthening Farm Viability and Safeguarding Healthy Soil

Washington, D.C. - [American Farmland Trust](#) released *Smart Solar*SM principles for solar development that will ensure we maintain our ability to produce food, fuel and fiber to sustain our nation for generations to come. Projects that conform to AFT's *Smart Solar* principles meet three important goals – to accelerate solar energy development, strengthen farm viability and safeguard land well-suited for farming and ranching.

“AFT’s principles aim to accelerate the generation of solar energy but offer a blueprint for solar development that maximizes climate mitigation while minimizing impact on productive farmland and strengthening opportunities for farmers,” said John Piotti, AFT president and CEO. “If done well, *Smart Solar* projects can provide income for farmers and landowners and protect land well-suited for agriculture. America needs both—much more solar energy AND productive, resilient farms and ranches.”

Smart Solar Principles

AFT has developed *Smart Solar* principles to help shape solar development across America. These principles can be applied broadly recognizing that Smart Solar will look



Emphasize solar energy development on rooftops, carports, irrigation ditches, brownfields or other land not well suited for agriculture to help minimize the impacts of solar energy on our nation's best agricultural land and farm businesses.

Principle 2: Safeguard the Ability for Land to Be Used for Agriculture

If solar energy is developed on farmland or ranchland, policies and practices should protect soil health, especially during construction and decommissioning, to ensure opportunities for farming in the future.

Principle 3: Grow Agrivoltaics for Agricultural Production & Solar Energy

Agriculture and solar energy can coexist if appropriate planning is undertaken. Agrivoltaic projects sustain agricultural production underneath solar panels and/or between rows of solar panels throughout the life of the project.

Principle 4: Promote Equity and Farm Viability

Farmers and underserved communities should benefit from solar energy development. There must be inclusive stakeholder engagement to ensure projects strengthen farm viability and reflect farmer interests, including underserved producers that face barriers to accessing land and other resources.

Without appropriate planning, solar development also threatens to convert millions of acres of farm and ranchland out of agricultural production. Significantly more renewable energy, including solar, is needed to reduce U.S. greenhouse gas emissions and combat the climate crisis. The Department of Energy's September 2021 Solar Futures Study estimates we will potentially need 10.3 million acres of land to achieve the Biden's administration's goal to scale up solar energy development from 4% to 45% of energy production by 2050 – with 90% of solar installation expected to be located in rural areas.

According to [Princeton's Zero Lab](#), the Inflation Reduction Act, could more than quintuple the amount of solar installed annually by 2025. The growth of solar development will



Farmers and ranchers need this transition to combat climate change and minimize future impacts from droughts, floods, extreme heat and beyond. **Smart Solar** guides solar development to where it has the least negative impact on land well suited for farming, ensures that agricultural land where projects are sited can be farmed in the future and promotes “agrivoltaics” (or “dual use”) solar projects that sustain agricultural production underneath and/or between rows of solar panels throughout the life of the project.

Solar energy development can create opportunities for farmers and landowners by generating new sources of income. But it also threatens farmer-renters who could be displaced and will have lasting impacts on local economies dependent on agricultural production. Farmland is already under threat from residential and commercial development, poorly planned housing development, strip malls and parking lots, which consume 2000 acres of agricultural lands daily. American Farmland Trust’s most recent study [**Farms Under Threat 2040: Choosing an Abundant Future**](#) shows if we continue this **business-as-usual** development 18 million acres will no longer be producing food, fuel and fiber by 2040. In the **runaway sprawl** scenario outlined in the report, 1 million acres per year may be paved over or fragmented, or otherwise converted to uses that jeopardize agriculture, taking 24 million acres out of production by 2040.

Using farmland to generate energy must be done with care. Farmland is needed for food security but also to sequester carbon, filter air and water and for wildlife habitat. As we work to decarbonize our energy grid, AFT believes we must also **save the land that sustains us** by adhering to **Smart Solar** principles. “Projects that align with AFT’s **Smart Solar** principles can also accelerate renewable energy development by enhancing community support for solar projects.”

In sharing these principles with policy makers, land trusts, agricultural organizations, farmers, the solar industry, conservationists and citizens, AFT seeks to stay true to its mission to protect farmland, implement environmentally sound farming practices and keep farmers on the land, while heeding the call to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and increase renewable energy production to mitigate climate change.



American Farmland Trust

permanently protect over 6.8 million acres of agricultural lands, advanced environmentally-sound farming practices on millions of additional acres and supported thousands of farm families.

About the Author

Lori Sallet