



State of Connecticut
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September 12, 2017

Ms. Melanie A. Bachman, Esq., Executive Director
Connecticut Siting Council
Ten Franklin Square
New Britain, CT 06501

Re: Petition 1313 – DWW Solar II, LLC Petition for Declaratory Ruling that No Certificate of Environmental Compatibility and Public Need Is Required for A 26.4 Megawatt AC Solar Photovoltaic Electric Generating Facility in Simsbury, Connecticut

For the record my name is John Hampton, State Representative for the 16th Assembly District, the Town of Simsbury. Thank you for the opportunity to provide this written testimony and for holding this hearing today.

After extensive review of the Deep Water Wind (DWW) Solar II, LLC Petition No. 1313 submitted to the State Siting Council for a Declaratory Ruling, I am asking that the application be denied. I believe that the motion for a Declaratory Ruling should be denied on the grounds that the Petition does not meet the procedural requirements of 16-50(a) of the general statutes as amended by Public Act 17-218. As a state legislator, this is a law I voted in support of, which was signed into law by the Governor with the effective date of July 1, 2017. Because Public Act 17-218 was passed with the support of legislative, executive and administrative agencies and many municipalities, I believe the company and the Siting Council should honor the intent of this law as it represents a clearly stated public policy in favor of working towards sustainable solar energy while still being able to preserve open space and farmland. This policy is based in large part on the findings detailed in a report “Energy Sprawl and Solar Farms” produced by the Council on Environmental Quality, which suggested solar farm generation facilities should be sited at brownfields or former landfills, instead of open space, farmland, or forests for all future solicitations. Given the scope and nature of this project, it is clear that it would materially affect up to at least 289 acres of land, including 90 acres of prime farmland, which is a huge concern for our residents, our town and our state. Because of this I believe the project should receive the highest scrutiny possible.

I stand in agreement with the Department of Agriculture and the Town of Simsbury that DWW be required to file and obtain a Certificate of Environmental Compatibility and Public Need. The effective date of the legislation was July 1, 2017 and therefore should apply to all decisions made by the Siting Council after this date. Under the law the requirement after July 1st is that:

the project must meet DEEP air and water quality standards; the Siting Council must find there is not substantial adverse environmental impact and the Department of Agriculture must supply written representation regarding any project that involves prime farmland.

Given the size and the scope of the project, which would be one of the largest of its kind in the region, the equivalent of approximately two hundred and twenty football fields, I believe the impact to the land's agricultural character, historical value, the neighboring residential property and nearby school would be substantial. These factors should weigh strongly against a favorable ruling. Once we start going down that road of developing what little farmland our state has left, there is no going back.

Going forward we must make sure that all resident concerns and questions about the project's agricultural, environmental, historical and quality of life impacts are answered and addressed before a final decision is made. If the Petition were to be approved by the Siting Council, I would ask that the project at least be reduced in scope to lessen the impact on neighboring properties and that the buffering, setbacks and landscaping be increased to make in blend in in with the rural character of our community. I would also ask that a stronger effort be made to preserve historical landmarks, including the tobacco barns located on Hoskins Road. The farms and barns in this area have historic significance in history as a younger Dr. Martin Luther King had worked on the farm over a couple of summers, which he has said provided him with life-changing experiences.

In closing, Simsbury's has long been a champion of promoting the rural nature of our community, and preserving open space, farmland, forests and sustainable clean energy (through our 100 percent CT policy). Because of these efforts and those of groups like the Simsbury Land Trust and the Save the Woods Community Group, nearly 30 percent of our land has been protected as open space.

I truly believe that we can continue towards sustainable solar energy while still being able to preserve open space and farmland. These are two environmental interests that do not need to compete against each other and strongly encourage any and all alternatives to be considered that don't involve building on our precious farmland.

Thank you again to the Siting Council for this opportunity to present testimony and I look forward to the work in the weeks and months ahead to make sure all these concerns are addressed in an open and transparent manner.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John K. Hampton". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial "J" and a long, sweeping underline.

John K. Hampton
16th District