THISTLEROCK
MEAD COMPANY

The Way of Nature

December 6th, 2022

Albemarle County Planning Commission
401 McIntire Rd
Charlottesville, VA 22902

To the Members of the Albemarle County Planning Commission,

Thistlerock Mead Company is a nature-based farm winery in Albemarle County opening in 2023. We, Thistlerock Mead Company, are writing this letter to express our unwavering support for the Hexagon Woodridge Solar Project. Solar farms provide an opportunity most unique: they can generate energy and save the bees while making wine.

At Thistlerock, we rely on pollinators. Pollinator decline is well documented, as is one of its leading causes – habitat loss. We have read the vegetation plan proposed by Hexagon at the Woodridge site, and as experts on bees and the plants they prefer, we can say without doubt that this solar project will help pollinators in Albemarle County. By planting native wildflowers and other flowering species, native pollinators such as mason bees, monarch butterflies, and hummingbirds will all see benefit. Hexagon will be providing diverse and nutritious nectar, pollen, and nesting shelter for these critical species.

When you plant hundreds of acres of flowers, there's enough goodness to go around. Our honeybees are also able to share in the advantages of the solar project. In Virginia, beekeepers usually experience a drop in colony growth in the summer. This time is referred to as the "dearth" meaning nectar to make honey is in short supply. At a site like the Woodridge site, where the bees have access to the trees surrounding the streams and project buffers in the spring, and wildflower meadows in the summer, there will be no "dearth". We are delighted to have signed a LOI with Hexagon to place honeybee hives at the Woodridge site for the purpose of mead production. The honey harvested from the hives in Albemarle County will go into delicious honey wine which we hope – one day – to share with the world. Not only does this promote Albemarle agriculture, but it's also a job creator, as hive management could be a full-time job, which trickles to mead makers and servers.

Our passion lies in creating high-quality value-added nature to bottle products in Virginia, while also having a positive impact on our environment. The Woodridge Solar Project is parallel and a perfect partner in our mission. Albemarle needs this project to move forward.

Sincerely,

The Team at Thistlerock Mead Company

John W. Kluge

John Kluge
Co-Founder and CEO

Doug Suchan
Co-Founder and Head Mead Maker

Allison Wickham
Co-Founder and Beekeeper

2386 Fiddlers Rdg
Scottsville, VA 24590

December 12, 2022

Dear Members of the Planning Commission –

I am writing to express both my support for and some concerns about the proposed Woodridge Solar Project.

My farm is at the end of Fiddlers Ridge, a 1-mile-long driveway off Secretary's Rd (close to the eastern end of the road), and the solar project will directly abut a substantial portion of my property's southwestern boundary.

I am strongly in favor of solar energy as a partial solution to our dependence on fossil fuels and their contribution to climate problems, and I applaud the commission and Albemarle County for tackling these issues. I also was very impressed with Hexagon's stated commitment to environmental stewardship – in particular, the establishment of substantial interconnected wildlife-friendly buffer zones and their desire to restore a healthy ecosystem to an area ravaged by clearcutting.

As someone with an intense interest in supporting biodiversity and restoring the native Piedmont ecosystem, I have been trying to control or ideally eliminate the most troublesome of the invasive alien species that have gained a foothold in my pasture and forest, and I want to be sure that the good intentions expressed in the project descriptions are supported with a solid plan for action and accountability.

An example of what I am worried about: Japanese stiltgrass is one example of an invasive species that I am battling. I spend substantial amounts of time weeding, mowing, "weed-eating," and spraying to try to get control of this aggressive species, which has completely displaced forage grasses in some sections of pasture and is thriving in parts of my forest and along my stream and areas of storm run-off. If the soil disruption that occurs as part of the solar project is not properly managed, stiltgrass could easily become a dominant species there, spreading seed to my farm and undoing the work that I am doing to restore the habitat here on my property.

Thus my concern is for habitat remediation and maintenance in general but also specifically, and more selfishly, for the effect on my own land.

That said, this seems like a solvable problem. We just need to be sure that whatever agreement you arrive at has "teeth" in it – and that it will survive any potential transfer of ownership.

Thank you,

Anne Stanford
2386 Fiddlers Rdg
Scottsville, VA 24590
Anne.stanford@gmail.com

BRUCE SULLIVAN
18 ORCHARD ROAD
CHARLOTTESVILLE, VIRGINIA 22903-4727

December 13, 2022

Mr. Frederick Missel
Planning Commission – Scotttsville District
County of Albemarle, Virginia
401 McIntire Road
Charlottesville, VA 22902

Via electronic mail

Re: Woodridge Solar – Application for Special Use Permit

Dear Mr. Missel

You may recall I reached out to you at the end of May trying to learn more about the Woodridge Solar Project. At the time, my 96 year-old mother and I had concerns about the project. I believe you asked the planning staff to contact me. Vivian Groeschel sent me an email with numerous links to the county's web page. There I found an extensive amount of information about the project. After reviewing that information, I met with Scott Remer, Director of Development for Hexagon Energy.

In the meeting, I explained to Scott that we had two primary concerns. Number one – how would we share the expense of maintaining Eyeland Drive. Eyeland Drive is essentially a very long driveway to my mother's house. Number two – How would Woodridge Solar visually shield their facility from the driveway. Over the past several months, Scott and I have corresponded, talked and met numerous times. We have come to an agreement (in writing) that I believe more than protects my mother's interests. I have also had the opportunity to meet and talk with Drew Price, Hexagon's president. My feeling is Hexagon and Woodridge Solar genuinely want to be a good neighbor and a responsible member of the community.

In broader terms, I support this project because I believe it is the right thing to do. It appears most of this land has not been well cared for. If the project does not proceed, there is a good chance other uses of the parcels may be detrimental to the land and surrounding community. If approved and completed, the proposed project has a number of positive attributes for the Woodridge/Blenhiem community. More importantly, Albemarle County has the chance to be a good global citizen. We can lead by example, and show others that, done properly, large scale solar projects benefit many – in the local community and beyond.

In summary, I ask that you and the other members of the planning commission recommend to the Board of Supervisors that they approve Woodridge Solar's application for a special use permit application. Thank you for your consideration of my opinions and for your service to Albemarle County.

Sincerely,

Bruce Sullivan

Copy to other members of the Planning Commission

REPORT **JULY 2022**

Woodridge Solar

Preliminary Policy Report

PREPARED BY

Claudia Aiken

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Hexagon Energy is seeking a Special Use Permit to build Woodridge Solar, a utility-scale photovoltaic project, on a former pine timber farm in the southeastern portion of Albemarle County. The definition of "utility-scale solar" varies by source, but its distinguishing factors are the amount of solar energy generated (a common threshold is 5 megawatts) and the fact that power is sold wholesale to utilities, rather than being net-metered like the "distributed solar" projects installed on residential rooftops. Thus, utility-scale solar projects often compete with other generators—such as coal and gas plants—in the wholesale power market.[1] Woodridge Solar would be capable of generating 138 megawatts (for reference, there are only 11 projects capable of generating over 50 megawatts in Virginia, out of 51 total utility-scale projects as of 2021).[2] This is enough energy to power approximately 25,000 homes (more than half of Albemarle County's approximately 42,300 occupied homes).[3] It would involve the installation of 650 acres of solar panels on a privately-owned property and have a lifetime of approximately 35 years.[4]

1 Urban Grid. "What is Utility-Scale Solar? An Overview." Website. Accessed July 17, 2022. https://www.urbangridsolar.com/what-is-utility-scale-solar-an-overview/

2 Carrie Hearne, Aaron Berryhill, and Elizabeth Marshall. Virginia Solar Survey: Results and Initial Findings. Virginia Department of Energy and the Virginia Solar Initiative at the Weldon Cooper Center for Public Service, University of Virginia, April 2022. https://solar.coopercenter.org/sites/solar/files/media/files/2022-05/VASolarSurveyReport_Complete_2022-05-18_Updated.pdf

3 U.S. Census Bureau. "Occupied Housing Units, Albemarle County." American Community Survey 2020 five-year estimates.

4 Hexagon Energy. Woodridge Solar. Website. Accessed July 16, 2022. https://www.woodridgesolar.com/

PRELIMINARY ANALYSIS

Political

Political arguments for and against a given intervention are important to consider because C3's mission is to catalyze action to confront climate change, not just among residents and businesses but also among public officials. Endorsing a politically unpopular project could deal a blow to C3's relationship with the community and/or with policymakers.

PROS

- Albemarle County has adopted clear greenhouse gas (GHG) emission reduction targets, including to reduce emissions by 45% below 2008 levels by 2030 and to achieve net zero emissions by 2050.[5] This project promises to increase constituents' confidence in the efficacy of their government in meeting its climate goals. Hexagon Energy estimates that Woodridge Solar alone would "allow Albemarle County to meet over 20% of its 2050 net-zero electricity emissions reduction goals."[6] If approved, Woodridge Solar will be the second utility-scale solar project to receive a Special Use Permit in Albemarle, but by far the largest—the other facility (located near Batesville) will generate only 8 megawatts of solar energy.[7]

- The company proposing to develop the project, Hexagon Energy, is a local company with offices in Downtown Charlottesville and employs about 20 people. The spokesperson for the project, Scott Remer, lives in Crozet with his family. This is an important political advantage, since Hexagon is unlikely to be seen as an outsider despite developing most of its previous projects in New England.[8]

CONS

- Albemarle County's Climate Action Plan states that the County will support utility-scale solar projects when there are public benefits, but that it will "strive to maintain a holistic perspective that accounts for climate benefits and the health of our local ecosystem" and that it will therefore "prioritize roof tops, parking lots, brownfields, landfills, and post-industrial or other open lands over forested or ecologically valuable lands for siting utility-scale renewable energy installations."[9] The proposed site for Woodridge Solar is partially forested and is also traversed by multiple waterways. While it is far from a pristine natural ecosystem because of its long use as a commercial timber farm, the parcel is not as obviously degraded as a parking lot or former industrial site. This could empower critics to argue that Woodridge Solar is not an appropriate use for the County's Rural Areas.

- Approving Woodridge Solar's Special Use Permit could set a poor precedent for building utility-scale solar on low-cost rural land and set up future competitions between solar and agricultural uses or encourage the destruction of old-growth forests and other prime natural resources.

5 Albemarle County. Climate Action Plan. October 2020. https://www.albemarle.org/home/showpublished-document/5432/637382865947300000

6 Hexagon Energy. Woodridge Solar. Website. Accessed July 16, 2022. https://www.woodridgesolar.com/

7 Charlotte Rene Woods. "A Proposed Solar Farm in Albemarle Could Power More than Half the County's Homes." Charlottesville Tomorrow. July 8, 2022. https://www.cvilletomorrow.org/articles/a-proposed-solar-farm-in-albemarle-could-power-more-than-half-the-countys-homes/

8 Albemarle County. Woodridge Solar Community Meeting. June 29, 2022. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=biZWzQSdz5c

9 Albemarle County. Climate Action Plan, p.36. October 2020. https://www.albemarle.org/home/showpublisheddocument/5432/637382865947300000

PROS

- The site is located far from cities or towns, so it will directly impact comparatively few residents with respect to traffic during construction or visual impact once built. Hexagon Energy has already made important concessions to residents who live near and will be directly impacted by the project, including by initiating discussions to renew the license of the local Woodridge Sportsmen's Club to hunt on the property and arranging solar arrays to avoid Monticello's viewshed.

- The timing of the proposal is propitious. The Virginia Clean Economy Act (VCEA) went into effect in 2020 and paved the way for utility-scale solar by reducing limits on the amount of energy that renewable energy companies can produce within territories served by utility companies like Dominion Energy. But the stress of such projects for existing infrastructure led PJM, the company that manages the region's electric grid, to announce a two-year moratorium on new energy projects requiring interconnections.[10] Woodridge Solar escaped the moratorium and expects to receive PJM's authorization for interconnection later this year. This will allow the project, if approved by the county, to move forward quickly; Hexagon estimates it could be completed as soon as next year.[11] Meanwhile, federal progress towards climate protection has stalled because of Sen. Manchin's resistance—potentially creating an even larger appetite for local action.

10 Ibid, n.7.
11 Ibid, n.8.

CONS

- The Woodridge Solar site wraps around several residential properties located along Secretarys Road north of Scottsville. Some of the residential property owners are strongly opposed to the project because it threatens to lower their property values and produce glare. Some voiced a conspiracy theory at a community meeting that the timber farm operators "sabotaged" the site by dousing it in herbicides in order to make its conversion to a solar farm more palatable and make the parcel's sale to Hexagon more profitable.[12]

12 Ibid, n.8.

Environmental

The principal argument in favor of developing solar projects is an environmental one—they produce energy without releasing the GHGs that are emitted when burning fossil fuels and therefore contribute much less to the warming of the Earth's climate. Unchecked, climate change promises to increase the frequency and severity of natural disasters, cause sea levels to rise, and have devastating impacts on biodiversity and agriculture. Yet individual solar projects impose a variety of environmental costs. C3 must weigh Woodridge Solar's capacity to reduce GHG emissions against its impacts on the site's natural resources.

In doing so, it is important to consider the most probable counterfactual for Woodridge Solar. It will replace power production from the retired Bremo combined coal and gas plant, which was located on the James River in Fluvanna County and was demolished in 2022.[13] In the absence of Woodridge Solar, the energy deficit would likely be made up in the form of a natural gas-fired power plant. Dominion Energy has built two large new gas plants since 2016 and plans to add several more, even as electricity demand in Virginia has flattened.[14]

13 Ibid, n.8.

14 Richard Martin and Darren Sweeney. "Overpowered: In Virginia, Dominion Faces Challenges to Its Reign." S&P Global Market Intelligence. December 4, 2019. https://www.spglobal.com/marketintelligence/en/news-insights/latest-news-headlines/overpowered-in-virginia-dominion-faces-challenges-to-its-reign-54171542

PROS

- Even accounting for the full lifecycle of a solar facility (including the manufacture of the panels and construction of the facility), it has a far lower carbon footprint than a gas plant with carbon capture and storage.[15] Woodridge Solar would contribute significantly to lowering Albemarle County's emissions and its impact on the climate.

15 Michaja Pehl et al. 2017. "Understanding Future Emissions from Low-Carbon Power Systems by Integration of Life-Cycle Assessment and Integrated Energy Modeling." Nature Energy 2: 939-945. https://www.nature.com/articles/s41560-017-0032-9

CONS

- Utility-scale solar generates far less power per acre of disturbed land as compared to another form of renewable energy—nuclear. "Existing utility-scale solar facilities [in the State of Virginia] can generate about 20% of the annual electricity generated by the North Anna Nuclear Power Station on a similar area of disturbed land."[16] That said, the degree of disturbance is very different—North Anna required land to be submerged under Lake Anna to cool the reactors, while utility-scale solar has a much less durable footprint.

16 Aaron Berryhill. Utility-Scale Solar in Virginia: An Analysis of Land Use and Development Trends. Prepared for the Virginia Department of Mines, Minerals, and Energy. Virginia Commonwealth University, 2021, p.21. https://scholarscompass.vcu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1043&context=murp_capstone

PROS

- The site has been used for approximately 80 years as a commercial timber farm. The pine forest is harvested periodically, which releases carbon stored in the plants. Timber farming depletes the soil and has eroded it in places, creating channels that allow for rapid stormwater runoff into the Hardware River and ultimately the James. Timber farmers typically also spray the harvested land with herbicide to discourage the growth of blackberries and other full-sun plants that will compete with the next generation of pines.[17] This activity causes environmental damage and poses risks to public health that will no longer occur if the solar farm proposal moves forward.

- Hexagon Energy has proposed several measures to restore the site, including creating a 200-ft setback from all property lines that will be partially reforested, partially planted with a native pollinator-friendly meadow mix; avoiding installing panels within 10 ft of water; installing only gravel access roads; and potentially using sheep to graze the grass around the panels rather than mowing.[18]

17 Ingrid Lobet. "In Oregon, Residents Struggle to Solve a Pesticide Mystery." The Atlantic, August 14, 2012. https://www.theatlantic.com/national/archive/2012/08/in-oregon-residents-struggle-to-solve-a-pesticide-mystery/261083/

18 Ibid, n.4.

CONS

- The solar facility is predicted to have a lifespan of only 35 years (though this is comparable to that of gas-fired power plants, it is shorter than some other renewable sources, including hydro- or nuclear power).[19] Hexagon Energy states that the solar panels are made from 90% recyclable materials, but this is no guarantee that they will indeed be recycled. Further, this does not account for the materials required for the multiple inverters and Dominion substation necessitated by the project.

- The solar arrays will be fenced, presumably for security reasons. Hexagon will fence the arrays "tightly" such that wildlife can still move through the site, but the amount of contiguous habitat will likely decrease significantly compared to the earlier pine forest.

- Woodridge Solar may negatively affect biodiversity in other ways, including by generating noise (while the panels make no sound, each inverter is comparable to a residential air conditioning unit in terms of noise production, and there will be significant noise associated with construction and mowing, if necessary); by compacting the soil in a way that causes burrow collapse; and by introducing roads that fragment habitat and cause wildlife fatalities.[20] A more thorough analysis would consider whether there are protected species that might be threatened by the project.

- The inverters needed to convert the direct current the solar panels generate into the alternating current used by the electrical grid emit a low level of electromagnetic field (EMF) radiation. However, all humans are exposed to EMF throughout daily life without observable negative health impacts. There is no proof that solar farms cause health issues.

19 Office of Nuclear Energy. "What's the Lifespan for a Nuclear Reactor? Much Longer than You Might Think." April 16, 2020. https://www.energy.gov/ne/articles/whats-lifespan-nuclear-reactor-much-longer-you-might-think

20 Jeffrey E. Lovich and Joshua R. Ennen. 2011. "Wildlife Conservation and Solar Energy Development in the Desert Southwest, United States." BioScience 61 (12): 982-992. https://academic.oup.com/bioscience/article/61/12/982/392612

Economic

Economic considerations are also important to C3's calculus. If Woodridge Solar can show that it will generate economic benefits—in the form of affordable energy costs, good jobs, tax revenue, etc.—to the County and its residents, it may strengthen the link between renewable energy, prosperity, and equity, and thereby encourage further climate action. C3 also works directly with local businesses to encourage GHG reductions; its credibility with the business community may be damaged if it endorses a project that proves insolvent or is otherwise economically unsound.

PROS

- Hexagon predicts that the project will generate millions in tax revenue for the County because the land use shift will trigger an increase in real estate tax payments and because the County will either impose a tax rate per megawatt or enter into a revenue-sharing agreement.[21] This revenue can be used for other climate-friendly investments, for instance in the bus fleet.

- Hexagon Energy is required to finance a bond that covers the full cost of decommissioning the solar facility at the end of its lifespan.[22] The relatively low-impact nature of the facility will make it far easier to return the site to an agricultural or other appropriate use post-decommissioning, compared to if the site were used for a fossil fuel or nuclear plant.

- The cost of solar energy has been decreasing and studies show that solar power purchase agreement (PPA) prices are "now often competitive with wind PPA prices, as well as the cost of burning fuel in existing gas-fired generators."[23] Further, solar may work to stabilize electric prices and keep them low in the long-term because of their far greater predictability than fossil fuel costs.[24]

21 Ibid, n.8.
22 Ibid, n.8.
23 Mark Bolinger, Joachim Seel, Cody Warner, and Dana Robinson. Utility-Scale Solar, 2021 Edition. Report. Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory, October 2021. https://emp.lbl.gov/sites/default/files/utility_scale_solar_2021_edition_slides.pdf
24 Kylie McCalmont. "Three Benefits of Utility-Scale Solar that Will Make You Want to Invest." EnergyLink, July 8, 2022. https://goenergylink.com/blog/3-benefits-of-utility-scale-solar/

CONS

- Hexagon estimates that the project will create over 250 jobs during construction, but only five workers will be supported for the life of the project. This is likely a lower level of employment than would be created by equal capacity in distributed solar, or by a gas-powered plant.

- It is unclear based on the available project information whether Woodridge Solar uses fixed-tilt panels or incorporates solar tracking technology. Projects with tracking technology have come to dominate new utility-scale solar (accounting for 89% of all new capacity in 2020); the cost premium for tracking projects has fallen over time.[25] If Woodridge Solar is a fixed-tilt project, it may already be outdated and will be forgoing an opportunity to generate more electricity on less land.

25 Ibid, n.23.

PROS

- Analysis shows that solar projects generating 100 megawatts or more cost 17% less than small projects (5-20 megawatts) per megawatt of installed capacity. This means that Woodridge Solar is taking advantage of significant economies of scale and delivering energy at a lower cost than the same number of panels distributed across more land.[26]

26 Ibid, n.23.

CONS

- It is also unclear whether the proposal involves a battery storage facility. If not, the power produced will not be "dispatchable," i.e., able to adjust output to the electrical grid on demand. But if so, Hexagon must purchase lithium-ion batteries during a lithium supply crisis that is driving over 400% year-over-year price increases.[27]

27 Emily Barone. "Lithium Is the Key to the Electric Vehicle Supply Transition. It's Also in Short Supply." Time Magazine, May 26, 2022. https://time.com/6182044/electric-vehicle-battery-lithium-shortage/

PRELIMINARY RECOMMENDATION

Based on strong political and environmental arguments in its favor, I recommend that the Board of Supervisors to grant a Special Use Permit to Hexagon Energy for the construction of the Woodridge Solar facility. The benefit to Albemarle County residents in the form of GHG reductions and potential tax revenue outweigh the adverse impacts to neighboring residents and local wildlife. The most plausible counterfactual is a gas-powered plant, which would have far greater negative impacts on neighboring residents and local wildlife with none of the climate benefits. Further, the proposal is politically advantageous given the County's pressing climate goals, the moratorium on additional renewable energy projects, and the stalemate at the federal level.

From: Caetano de Campos Lopes <caetano@theclimatecollaborative.org>
Sent: Tuesday, December 13, 2022 11:51 AM
To: Planning Commission <PlanningCommission@albemarle.org>
Cc: Katie Ebinger <katie@theclimatecollaborative.org>; Susan Kruse <susan@theclimatecollaborative.org>; Carolyn Shaffer <cshaffer2@albemarle.org>
Subject: AC Planning Commission - Woodridge Solar Development

Dear Albemarle County Planning Commission,

The Community Climate Collaborative (C3) is writing in support of granting a special-use permit to the Woodridge Solar Development for the substation and solar farm requests.

Solar energy is a vital part of our low-carbon future and it has the potential to bring economic and health benefits to Virginia. We are excited by Hexagon Energy's 138 MW plan at Woodridge, which we expect will produce jobs, generate higher tax revenue, and prevent greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and air pollution from sites like coal-fired power plants.

C3's team created an analysis of the project (the full report will be released soon) and we wanted to highlight the following:

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- **Climate Justice:**
- The Woodridge project scored highly on the promotion of climate justice, a topic that C3
- analyzed by aggregating and comparing the best practices in procedural, distributional, and restorative justice.
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    - The project effectively engaged local environmental groups, which resulted in a well-thought-out
    - design that centers ecosystem health throughout each stage of the development process.
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    - Community outreach could have been improved by including more language offerings and compensation
    - for community members' participation/input. As the project progresses, including the voices of community members who have otherwise been unengaged in this project will be important.
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    -

- Overall, Hexagon went beyond Albemarle County's required community engagement, and feedback elicited
- from neighbors through this process was ultimately included in the proposed project design.
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- **Climate Change Mitigation:**
- The project is expected to reduce carbon emissions and have a net climate change mitigating
- effect.
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    -
    -
    - We estimate that in the first year of operations, the clean energy directly created from the project
    - will result in roughly 127,000 US
    - tons of GHG emissions mitigated.
    -
    -
    -
    - Additionally, the proximity to existing electric power transmission lines, in the case of the Woodridge
    - site, makes the location of this site a strategic choice. When new transmission lines are built to connect the solar farms with the grid, significant deforestation might follow. For every mile of a new transmission line not constructed, the project could prevent
    - clearing 5,460 to 14,520 trees.
    -

After our analysis, C3 is excited by the climate mitigation potential of this project as well as the thoughtful attention paid to protecting the environment and informing the public of the site. **We urge County Supervisors and the Planning Commission to support the project to benefit our local community and global climate health.**

Sincerely,
Caetano de Campos Lopes

PS: We will share our full report/analysis with you shortly.

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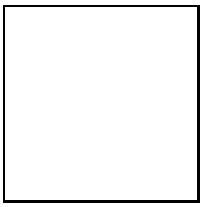


Caetano de Campos Lopes
Director of Climate Policy, Community Climate Collaborative
cel. (434) 466-6345
theclimatecollaborative.org

-----Original Message-----
From: Carol Carter <carterc702@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, December 13, 2022 3:28 PM
To: Planning Commission <PlanningCommission@albemarle.org>
Subject: Woodridge Utility Solar project

Dear Planning Commission,

I regret that I cannot be in attendance tonight, but as a longtime local landowner, I would like to share my thoughts on this project.

I am a supporter of electrification and solar in general, particularly rooftop solar on residential homes, and government and commercial buildings.
I am also active in land and water conservation in the Commonwealth and Albemarle County.

Scott Remer has been most generous with his time and expertise in meeting with several local landowners and we are grateful for his careful consideration of our concerns. He has been a pleasure to work with.

I fervently hope that the County will be very very careful as it moves forward with this project. It must become a model of careful land management for any other large solar projects in this county or others. The "cut and fill" required to grade 650 acres of rolling farm and timberland is staggering and will simply destroy the soil structure and health for the foreseeable future. The soil does not regenerate on its own and even with the plan for added nutrients to sustain a thin cover crop, the agricultural value of this soil is degraded as the soil structure is lost.

Rigorous erosion management, sediment control and stormwater management as well as "downstream" monitoring must be built into this project and any others the County considers.

The buffers and PollinatorSmart vegetation that Hexagon promotes and installs must have a long term monitoring and management program in place and funded to ensure longevity of the plantings.

The County may be viewing this as a boon to tax revenue but it is a loss of forest and agriculture land for the future.

The decommissioning process is also critical. Nuclear fusion is already on the horizon and even solar will start to look outdated soon. I hate to see Albemarle County pay the price for Northern Virginia's data center boon.

A strong, well thought out Solar Ordinance needs to be in place prior to build-out of this project. Meanwhile, let's move more rapidly on rooftop solar.

Thank you for your consideration,
Carol Carter
Redlands Farm

Secretary’s Road

From: Charlie Armstrong <CharlesA@southern-development.com>
Sent: Monday, December 5, 2022 3:03 PM
To: Alberic Karina-Plun <akplun@albemarle.org>; Andy Herrick <aherrick@albemarle.org>; Bart Svoboda <bsvoboda@albemarle.org>; Carolyn Shaffer <cshaffer2@albemarle.org>; Corey Clayborne <cclayborne@albemarle.org>; Cynthia Hudson <chudson2@albemarle.org>; David Benish <DBENISH@albemarle.org>; Doug Walker <dwalker3@albemarle.org>; Francis MacCall <FMACCALL@albemarle.org>; Frederick Missel <fmissel@albemarle.org>; Jessica Hersh-Ballering <jhballering@albemarle.org>; Jodie Filardo <jfilardo@albemarle.org>; Julian Bivins <jbivins@albemarle.org>; Karen Firehock <kfirehock@albemarle.org>; Kevin McDermott <kmcdermott@albemarle.org>; Lonnie Murray <lmurray@albemarle.org>; Luis Carrazana <lcarrazana1@albemarle.org>; Luis Carrazana <lac2z@virginia.edu>; Patricia Smith <psmith@uvafoundation.com>; Rebecca Ragsdale <rragsdale@albemarle.org>; Tori Kanellopoulos <vkanellopoulos@albemarle.org>; Vivian Groeschel <vgroeschel@albemarle.org>
Subject: Woodridge Solar

Dear Planning Commissioners,

I'm a County resident. I use electricity. At my house I have a 14kW solar array that offsets about 90% of my usage. I did not have good rooftop solar orientation, and preferred to keep some trees around my house, so I had to compromise some of my yard space in order to be able reduce my electricity usage and carbon footprint. The greater goal justified the sacrifice of land. That was 5 years ago and I've never for a single day regretted allowing my solar panels to occupy a portion of my yard. And Dominion Energy is kind enough to remind me monthly that I use almost no energy (and that my investment pays dividends every single daylight hour).

Albemarle County (as a whole) uses a lot of electricity. Some residents individually mitigate some of their electrical impact. Others don't. Many can't. Utility scale solar projects like the one proposed by Hexagon are a major critical component to any plan to ween off of domestic fossil fuels, reduce carbon emissions, improve utility grid stability, reduce dependence on commodities outside our control, and even to improve geopolitical stability. At every level of political subdivision we should be striving to do our part: globally, nationally, statewide, and at the county level.

The news reports say this project alone would provide the equivalent of half of the electricity that is consumed in all of Albemarle. All it takes is about 1/10 of a percent (0.001) of the County's total land area to do that. Imagine if we were to dedicate 1/3 of one percent (0.003) of the County's land to projects like this—we could produce ALL of the power used in Albemarle and Charlottesville combined, right here at home. We would not import a single watt from outside our County. That really would be amazing. "*My county runs on 100% clean energy*" sounds pretty good. Something I would brag about. This one project could get us halfway to that!!

We find it valuable to occupy some of our land with reservoirs and water treatment facilities so that we can have sustainable local drinking water. Yet we have no electrical power plants. We import our power from power plants in adjacent counties, which import their generating fuel from uranium mines and gas wells in West Virginia, Pennsylvania, and Louisiana. It is irresponsible and hypocritical to import dirty

fuel from a thousand miles away when we can instead harvest clean energy from the sun right here at home.

Here is an opportunity to do our part. This proposal is a gift.

These projects are often derailed because of well-organized and often wealthy political opposition. People who oppose them cite all kinds of reasons. Many are red herrings. Some are valid, but must be weighed against the enormity of what would be achieved by this project. It would be unacceptable for Albemarle to allow a few loud voices, some of which are almost certain to be "anti change" people masquerading as environmentalists, to distract you from the local and global good that can come from sourcing our electricity from sustainable renewable energy sources like solar.

We talk a good talk here in Albemarle. We claim to be progressive. We have a climate action plan. But do we only prioritize global warming and clean air via our words or do we tackle it via our actions? Do we just continue to buy our energy from the gas fields of the Gulf of Mexico or do we solve that problem right here? Do we acknowledge that solutions can still be incredibly good even if imperfect? If we're honest about what it takes to do what we say we want, we should be very careful not to look for reasons to say no to projects like Hexagon's. We should always be looking for ways to say yes. Like I did in my own yard, Albemarle needs to dedicate a tiny percentage of its land to achieve this important goal. You can enthusiastically support this even if it still has a couple of warts, most of which can probably be worked out during final site plan review. And after this and maybe one or two more like it get built, you will feel pretty good knowing that your home's electricity comes from right here in Albemarle.

Sincerely,
Charlie Armstrong

CHARLIE ARMSTRONG | Vice President
O 434.245.0894 x 108
carmstrong@southern-development.com

SOUTHERN DEVELOPMENT HOMES
southern-development.com

2010 - 2021 Daily Progress Readers' Choice Favorite Builder
2010 - 2021 Charlottesville Family Favorite Builder
2017 - 2019 Best of C-ville #1 Homebuilder

From: Christine Putnam <chirshputnam@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, December 12, 2022 9:12 PM
To: Planning Commission <PlanningCommission@albemarle.org>
Subject: Woodridge Solar Project

Dear Members of the Planning Commission,

I live on Secretarys Rd on a parcel of land that will be surrounded by the proposed solar project. I understand the need for alternative energy sources to address climate change. That said, I would rather see solar installations on brownfields and on rooftops, but I also understand that the Woodridge site has some advantages given its proximity to a transmission line with open capacity to carry the generated electricity.

As the chair of the Albemarle County Natural Heritage Committee and a citizen who is deeply concerned about the protection of our natural resources, I am particularly concerned about the impact this solar project will have on the land. I want to commend Scott Remer for listening to these concerns and the commitment Hexagon has made to restoring native vegetation and protecting stream buffers. I have read the Vegetative Management Plan for this project. It is a sound plan that relies on active monitoring in order to be successful. I know how difficult it is to establish plant cover on these acidic soils which have been impacted by decades of industrial timber production. This job will be made even more difficult due to the intensive grading that will have to take place under and around the panels. One can only hope that after the soil amendments have been added and the seed is dispersed that the weather will cooperate to create a thriving vegetative cover. But there is the real possibility that the weather will not cooperate, that there will be places where the seed does not take, and where invasive plants will take hold. This is why a third party professional is needed to make sure the vegetative management plan is properly implemented and monitored not only during the first few years, but throughout the life of the project. The developer should provide funds for this monitoring and any needed remediation. We can not expect County staff or neighboring citizens to take on this responsibility. If we want to see the land restored to support a biodiverse landscape of native plants which will in turn support pollinators, birds and other wildlife, active monitoring must take place.

With a project of this size, there is a lot at stake. We need to make sure we get it right. The County is in the process of hiring a consultant to help write an ordinance for utility-scale solar. A model ordinance should require that all utility-scale solar projects meet the Virginia PollinatorSmart Solar Certification criteria and that the projects are properly monitored. Before approving the Woodridge project, I hope that the County will either wait until a model ordinance is in place or require monitoring to ensure that the vegetative management plan is properly implemented and monitored.

Thank you for your consideration,

Christine Putnam
2086 Secretarys Rd
Scottsville, VA 23490

-----Original Message-----
From: Colin Frankenfield <colin.frankenfield@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, December 13, 2022 5:01 PM
To: Planning Commission <PlanningCommission@albemarle.org>
Subject: Woodridge Solar

To the Albemarle Planning Commission:

My name is Colin Frankenfield and I'm a resident of Albemarle County. I am in the Scottsville District and my address is 282 Pfister Avenue, Charlottesville, VA 22903. I will be participating at the meeting tonight and am writing in support of the proposed solar farm, Woodridge Solar.

Over the next 25 years in order to electrify as much as we can, we will need to install about 75 gigawatts of renewable electricity per year. This is 3x our historical rate of about 22 gigawatts. Similar to how Texas has been a leader for on-shore wind, I believe Virginia and Albemarle County can lead the way in utility scale-solar and offshore wind due to our abundance of natural resources. As a clean-tech hub, in addition to clean power, the adjacent economic benefits can also be significant - including software engineering and materials scientists, focused on plant optimization software and storage technologies.

I believe that Albemarle should set a goal of "1 Gig" in 10 years and Woodridge would get us just 10% of the way there. I support the development of Woodridge Solar because of its lower cost, clean energy and positive local economic impact.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,
Colin Frankenfield

—
(757-651-0286)

December 13, 2022

Albemarle County Planning Commission
401 McIntire Road
Charlottesville VA 22902

Re: Woodridge Solar Project - Special Use Permit Application – Recommend Approval

Dear Members of the Albemarle County Planning Commission:

I am writing to express support for the Woodridge Solar Project, and encourage the Planning Commission to find that it is in conformance with Albemarle County's Comprehensive Plan and recommend approval of the Special Use Permit Application for the project.

The Project will benefit Albemarle County by providing needed economic development and both short-term and long-term employment, by increasing tax revenue, by providing other economic benefits to the area, and by making effective long-term use of the land consistent with its owners' wishes. Furthermore, the project will generate significant amounts of clean, efficient renewable energy for Virginia electric customers, and will help meet goals of both the County's Climate Action Plan, and the Virginia State Energy Plan. The proposed solar project is unobtrusive, properly located and well-thought-out, and includes proper setbacks and vegetative buffers, in compliance with and in some cases exceeding requirements in both the County's Comprehensive Plan and Zoning Ordinance. As such it provides significant benefits to the County and its residents while at the same time not disrupting the rural nature of the area nor the enjoyment of the surrounding property.

I would also remind the Planning Commission of the intense level of environmental regulatory scrutiny such projects attract, having to comply with all manner of State and Federal regulations, ensuring environmental and resource protection. In particular the project will provide extensive erosion and sedimentation and storm water control measures to comply with Virginia state regulations, thereby protecting soils and water quality far better than what the current mostly uncontrolled clearcutting of the site provides (as happens routinely across the County and State). The project's participation with the Virginia Pollinator-Smart program will transform a barren clear-cut site into a productive solar farm with good groundcover and a thriving ecosystem in buffer areas that supports pollinator species, birds, and other wildlife while improving water quality and soil conditions.

I am an Albemarle County resident and have extensive experience in design and development of large scale solar farms, wind farms, and other power generation facilities, having worked in the renewable energy sector for most of my career. I know a good project when I see one and I am thrilled for Albemarle County's opportunity to assist this project in moving forward, thereby become more self-sustaining in contributing to the County's energy needs. I further commend the planning staff for their thorough review of this application and proper recommendation for approval.

I thank you for approving the Woodridge Solar Project's permit applications and allowing it, and Albemarle County, to move forward.

Sincerely,

David A. Stoner

6858 Rockfish Gap Turnpike
Greenwood, VA 22943
434-227-2105
davidastoner1@gmail.com
www.stonerpowerconsulting.com

Cc: Ann Mallek
Bill Fritz

From: Dolores Dwyer <joydotter@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, December 12, 2022 1:03:37 PM
To: Carolyn Shaffer <cshaffer2@albemarle.org>
Subject: statement for Dec. 13 meeting

Dear Ms. Shaffer,

I plan to attend tomorrow evening's Planning Commission meeting to make a brief statement regarding the proposed Woodridge Solar project. Do I need a link or password other than what appears on the Albemarle County web site?

Following is a draft of my comments:

My name is Dolores Dwyer and I live in Alberene, a community just about due west of the proposed Woodridge solar site. I am generally in favor of new solar farms as long as they do not cause environmental damage or have other negative effects. Given current information, I support this specific proposal, for its projected clean energy production, for the soil remediation plans to help to offset any potential effects of removing trees from the terrain, and for its required stormwater management. I also applaud Hexagon for its plan to maintain a place for wildlife and for hunting.

Any awarding of Special Use Permits ought to involve the following:
-- Transparency regarding any additional costs to ratepayers or tax abatements
-- Provisions for oversight on soil remediation, stormwater management, and other promises made by Hexagon Energy throughout the approval process.
-- Opportunities for training, paid internships, and employment for residents of the surrounding communities in solar panel installation, soil and other land management sciences, and related fields.

I also urge the Planning Commission and the BOS to assess the county in terms of deforestation, and determine if and where new trees might be planted to offset their removal elsewhere.

Thank you for listening.
--
Dolores Dwyer
joydotter@gmail.com

-----Original Message-----
From: Mary Jane Pudhorodsky <pudfam@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, December 13, 2022 5:41 PM
To: Planning Commission <PlanningCommission@albemarle.org>
Subject: Support for Woodbridge Solar project

As a county resident who believes that social and environmental justice and climate change must be addressed locally, I am speaking in support of the Woodridge Solar Project. I urge you to recommend that the County Supervisors vote to approve a special-use permit for solar development by Hexagon Energy at the Woodridge site.
I'm a recent graduate of Virginia Cooperative Extension's Master Gardener training,so I am pleased that the project plans include extensive vegetation management for improved biodiversity, with potential benefits to our local ecosystem and it qualifies for the Virginia Pollinator Smart program.
The project is at a strategic location along an existing transmission line, that can be used to connect to the grid.
The community needs to be involved in local efforts for the Climate Action Plan to move forward. That's why I'm speaking tonight. Increased community involvement leading up to the construction of the project needs to be encouraged by the Planning Commission and the Board of Supervisors.
We all use power and have a vested interest in replacing fossil fuels with renewables. My vested interest includes wanting to leave behind a livable Earth for my 7 grandchildren. My husband and I do what we can. We have solar panels on our roof and I drive an EV. But renewable energy needs to be produced at scale if we want to address climate change. This project fits that need. I am encouraged and excited that a renewable source of energy at this scale could happen in Albemarle County. Please recommend approval of it to the Board of Supervisors.
Janie Pudhorodsky
1320 River Chase Ln
Charlottesville, Va 22901

Sent from my iPhone

From: Kat Maybury <katmaybury@yahoo.com>
Sent: Friday, December 9, 2022 6:07 PM
To: Karen Firehock <kfirehock@albemarle.org>; Corey Clayborne <cclayborne@albemarle.org>; Julian Bivins <jbivins@albemarle.org>; Frederick Missel <fmissel@albemarle.org>; Lonnie Murray <lmurray@albemarle.org>; Luis Carrazana <lac2z@virginia.edu>
Cc: Carolyn Shaffer <cshaffer2@albemarle.org>; Planning Commission <PlanningCommission@albemarle.org>
Subject: Woodridge Solar + Vegetation Mgmt Plan

Dear Commissioners:

I'm writing to express my support for the Woodridge Solar project which I understand you'll be discussing on December 13. In particular, I want to comment on the project's Vegetation Management Plan because I feel I have the most to offer in terms of expertise and experience when it comes to that aspect of the project.

While I am not a landscape designer, and can't address every aspect of the plan, I have over 20 years of experience in biodiversity conservation, focusing on plant species. I also have some personal, hands-on experience with the difficulties of re-establishing native grasses and forbes on a site with nutrient-poor, acidic soil.

I believe the vegetation plan is well thought out and, assuming it is implemented appropriately, will provide a great number of ecological benefits, including early-to-late-season pollinator food sources, bird habitat and food resources, and erosion control for water quality.

I was impressed with the variety of native species chosen for each zone, with species that could tolerate extremely dry conditions as well as those tolerant of boggy soils. This should provide flexibility when planting the shrubs and resiliency in the overall seeding mix.

The non-native plants to be used for specific purposes (e.g., sheep grazing, temporary seeding) seem to have been chosen with care and intention.

The current use of the site is industrial timber (for a species not native to this part of the Piedmont). Given the huge green energy benefits of the Woodridge Solar project, this vegetation plan seems to be an additional strong reason to support it. The revegetation and management of the site according to the proposed plan would be a net plus for Albemarle County's ecological and biological diversity.

Thank you,
Kat

Kat Maybury
4877 Browns Gap Tpke
Crozet, VA 22932
katmaybury@yahoo.com
(571) 236-6944 *(cell)*

From: Kathryn Bertoni <kat.trent.bertoni@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, December 12, 2022 7:06 PM
To: Planning Commission <PlanningCommission@albemarle.org>
Subject: Woodbridge Solar Project

Dear Commissioners,

I am writing in support of the Woodbridge Solar Project to be considered at the Planning Commission meeting tomorrow, 12/13/2022. This project is consistent with the county's climate and land use goals and will provide an opportunity for Albemarle County to establish itself as a leader in Virginia for large scale utility solar projects.

In order to make progress towards the area climate goals, both Charlottesville and surrounding localities must make a commitment to these bold, at-scale projects.

Thank you,
Kathryn Bertoni

December 8, 2022

Albemarle County Planning Commission
401 McIntire Road
Charlottesville VA 22902

ATTN: Carolyn Shaffer, Clerk
Planning Commission

Kirk A Bowers, PE, Conservation Chair,
Piedmont Group, Virginia Chapter, Sierra Club
Charlottesville, VA
Email: engr1950@gmail.com

SUBJ: Woodridge Solar facility

Dear Planning Commission members,

We support approval of the Woodridge Solar concept plan and SUP with the following recommendations:

1. Include specifications in the construction plans to:

- Minimize construction-related compaction,
- ensure a high cover of perennial vegetation with minimal maintenance, and
- design the site with pervious space between solar panel rows to promote infiltration of stormwater runoff. Use structural stormwater management facilities, such as infiltration basins, only to augment stormwater runoff control.
  Solar farms can be designed to minimize the impact on landscape ecohydrological processes. Current stormwater management practices recommend low impact development practices of disconnection of solar panel impervious surfaces, well-developed shade-tolerant vegetation, and minimal impact of construction practices on soil properties.
  However, there is no mention of using LID methods for stormwater water management in the Concept Plan. Instead, stormwater basins are shown along the edges of graded areas. At a minimum, the site should be evaluated for suitability of using LID for stormwater management or a hybrid combination of LID and conventional stormwater management practices.
  The Albemarle County CAP and Comprehensive plan encourage and support groundwater recharge as a site development stormwater practice. Using LID, as part of the stormwater management plan, would provide a means to recharge groundwater from site development.

2. Select site management practices that minimize adverse impacts (soil compaction) and maximize additional benefits, such as leveraging sheep grazing for vegetation management in lieu of frequent mowing.
3. The construction sequence plan on sheet C8.0 shows 7 areas that are within the limits of disturbance. Area 1 is shown as 267 acres that will be cleared and graded. The grading plan on sheet C9.1 and layout plan on sheet C3.1 show relatively steep slopes in Area 1. Due to the steeper slopes and soils with moderate to high erodibility, there is a high probability that sediment will be difficult to capture onsite. It is strongly recommended that site grading is limited to smaller drainage areas.
4. Vegetation must be established before another area is cleared and graded. Ensure the construction sequencing allows time for established vegetation and avoid sequencing the project in a manner that causes compaction of soils by heavy equipment.

   In the photos below, you can see channels eroding between panel array rows. The panels are impervious surfaces that increaser stormwater runoff. A solution to avoid channel erosion and to provide groundwater recharge would be to use infiltration swales or engineered swales BMPs between the panel rows. The use of LID methods for stormwater management should be considered.

Thank you for serving Albemarle County.

Sincerely,

Kirk A Bowers, PE

From: Kyle Matous <kyle.matous@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, December 13, 2022 11:18 AM
To: Planning Commission <PlanningCommission@albemarle.org>; Board of Supervisors members <bos@albemarle.org>; Scott Clark <Sclark@albemarle.org>; Bill Fritz <BFRITZ@albemarle.org>
Subject: Writing in support of Woodridge Solar

My name is Kyle Matous and I am a resident of Albemarle County, where I own homes both at 4737 Loyola Way and 580 Knoll Ridge Drive. I write in support of Woodridge Solar, and **request that you vote to make a positive recommendation to the Board of Supervisors to approve the project.**

The project would create over 250 green jobs during construction, provide millions of dollars in economic benefit for the region, **and create new tax revenue for the County**. The firm that is developing Woodridge Solar is Charlottesville-based, too, so we're helping local energy entrepreneurs along the way.

Over the next 35 years the project would create low cost, clean energy for up to 25,000 homes, which is nearly half of the homes in our county. This project alone will allow Albemarle County to meet over 20% of its 2050 net-zero electricity emissions reduction goals.

Jobs. Economic growth. Tax revenue. Locally owned. Clean energy. USA, you guys.

- Kyle Matous

December 8, 2022

Dear Planning Commission,

We are writing in support of the Special Use Permits for the Woodridge Solar Project. Our research has found this project to be consistent with the county's environmental and land use goals, and we hope it will be approved and constructed.

Livable Cville's mission is to advocate for policies to build an inclusive Charlottesville area with affordable housing, sustainable transportation, and healthy neighborhoods welcoming to all. Climate change and environmental justice are urgent matters, and we must address them at the local level.

The Woodridge Solar Project is an opportunity for Albemarle County to establish itself as a leader in Virginia for how to do utility scale solar projects well. It is a chance to say "yes" to renewable energy locally while preserving the ecological integrity of the site through a vegetation management plan that will remediate the land and grow hundreds of acres of native plants.

The project is consistent with Phase One of Albemarle County's Climate Action Plan. The CAP recommends that when considering utility-scale renewable energy projects, the county should "strive to maintain a holistic perspective that accounts for potential climate benefits and the health of our local ecosystem." This project maintains that balance through a combination of reduction in carbon emissions, room for effective stormwater management, and an extensive vegetation management plan that qualifies for the Virginia Pollinator Smart program.

Another chance to make this much progress on the county's environmental goals through renewable energy is unlikely to come along anytime soon. Hexagon Energy secured a connectivity agreement with PJM for this project – and just in time, since the regional transmission operator recently announced a two-year pause on new power developments seeking connection to its grid. Rejection of Woodridge Solar could cause the county to miss this window of opportunity and give solar developers pause about pursuing local utility-scale projects longer term. It could take decades for smaller community-scale and rooftop projects to provide an equivalent amount of renewable energy in Albemarle County.

We understand that this project is complicated, represents a significant change for land use on this site, and is unlike anything ever done before in Albemarle County. We also see it as a win-win situation – giving Albemarle County the chance to both improve local ecological diversity and act quickly on its ambitious goals to address climate change.

We hope you recommend approval for this project.

Thank you for your consideration.

Livable Cville

From: Mark Anderson <mark.anderson@willowtreeapps.com>
Sent: Tuesday, December 13, 2022 4:03 PM
To: Planning Commission <PlanningCommission@albemarle.org>
Subject: Support for Woodridge Solar

Hello,

I want to write to show my support for the Woodridge Solar project. I think it's a really great idea to invest in the local land and resources, and this seems like as well thought out and beneficial of a project as I can imagine. Partnering with a local energy company helps lead Charlottesville and Albemarle as a leader in the space, and by building it locally we show that we are willing to put our "money where our mouth is" for building clean energy and meeting our climate goals. Additionally, I love that building it locally here and getting our energy here helps us be more self-sufficient as a community. Finally, the introduction of wildflowers and pollinating natural/native species is awesome and something I'd love more of, because it benefits us specifically here in central Virginia, as well as our planet as a whole.

Please approve the project! Thank you

- Mark Anderson

Piedmont Environmental Council

Protecting and promoting the natural resources, rural economy, history and beauty of the Virginia Piedmont since 1972

VIA EMAIL ONLY | PlanningCommission@albemarle.org

December 12, 2022

Ms. Karen Firehock, Chair
Albemarle County Planning Commission
401 McIntire Road
Charlottesville, Virginia 22902

Re: Woodridge Solar SP202200014, SP202200015, and SE202200035

Dear Chair Firehock and Planning Commission members,

The Piedmont Environmental Council (PEC) respectfully submits the following comments regarding Woodridge Solar SP202200014, SP202200015, and SE202200035.

PEC supports solar energy. For decades now, we have been committed advocates for rooftop and ground-mount systems. In addition, we have spoken in support of carefully sited utility-scale solar proposals, like the Dominion facility located in Remington, Virginia, and the proposed solar facility on the Rivanna Solid Waste Authority's former landfill at the Ivy Material Utilization Center.

We recognize that utility-scale solar facilities will play a critical role in the Commonwealth's transition to clean energy. Appropriately siting, designing, constructing, maintaining, and decommissioning these facilities is key to adequately addressing potential adverse environmental impacts.

Given the proposed mass grading of the entire 650-acre area of solar arrays and associated development, including the extensive depth of cutting and filling of soil, this project is precedent-setting. The County has the opportunity to set a higher standard for utility-scale solar facilities in the County's Rural Areas.

Summary of PEC's recommendations concerning the Special Use Permit Conditions:

Mitigation of Adverse Impacts | Mass Grading of the Entire Project Area

- Owing to the mass grading of the project site, the owner should be required by the County to mitigate the adverse impacts through annual payments from the solar facility owner to the County, in addition to the annual taxes paid or revenue sharing provided by the owner.

Erosion and Sediment Control, Grading, and Stormwater Management

- Although the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality does not require this standard to be met by applicants who obtain an interconnection approval by a regional transmission organization or electric utility by December 31, 2024, PEC recommend the County require this more stringent standard in the stormwater management design for this project, to protect the local water quality and prevent excessive stormwater runoff.
- PEC recommends that the owner pay for an independent third party to review all stormwater management plans and erosion and sediment control plans in addition to the County's review process.
- During construction, the owner should pay for the services of an independent qualified third-party inspector, to undertake inspection of the erosion and sediment control measures.

Virginia Pollinator-Smart Solar Program

- PEC recommends that the applicant should be required to establish pollinator plants for all disturbed areas of the project area that are not roads or facilities, including all planted buffer areas and all areas of solar panels.

Vegetation Management Plan and Plants Species

- PEC recommends that all buffer plantings and pollinator plantings be inspected on an annual basis by an independent third-party inspector qualified to assess the health of the existing forested areas that serve as visual buffer, planted visual buffers, stream buffer vegetation, and pollinator plantings.

Decommissioning

- The removal of the entirety of all above-ground and below-ground equipment, structures, and other improvements is needed so the site may have a greater likelihood of returning to another use at the end of the facility's operation.

Mitigation of Adverse Impacts | Mass Grading of the Entire Project Area

A consistent theme in the applicant's proposal has been to emphasize the site's long-standing past use as a timbering operation and to downplay the many benefits that commercial timberland provides to the locality such as soil stabilization, carbon sequestration, air filtration, run-off interception, and wildlife habitat which will not be recreated by the solar facility installation. The consistent theme has been that the proposed solar facility represents a use that allows the soils on the site to heal and rest, and ultimately be able to return to agricultural land or working forested land after the life of the project. Respectfully, that claim is not well-supported. The proposed mass grading, disruption of soils, and likely compaction of soils with heavy equipment are counterproductive to efforts aimed at resting or healing land. Dr. Lee Daniels, a soils scientist at Virginia Tech researching impacts of utility-scale solar facilities on soils, has found that soils will not be the same after construction and removal of utility-scale projects: tillage is required to loosen compacted soils, topsoil is very difficult to

reintroduce, and most sites will require soil amendments.[i] The applicant's decommissioning plan do not offer any guarantee of site restoration at the end of the project's life.

The County staff report indicates, based on the applicant's submitted decommissioning plan, the project site will be returned to 2022 conditions. The applicant has provided conceptual grading plans, including soil cutting and filling diagrams, which indicate the cutting of existing highpoints and ridges by up to 12 feet of depth and the filling of drainageways to a depth of up to 16 feet. The proposed grading concept indicates large-scale mass grading of the entire project area that is typically encountered in large-scale land development projects. The proposed mass grading work will require extensive use of heavy earthmoving equipment and compacted layers of fill. The results of this approach will be loss of existing natural landforms, creation of new landforms, and the degrading of the soils—much of which is classified as prime agricultural soils—by being transported within the site and co-mingled with other soils, and compaction. The decommissioned site will likely not support (or be well-suited for) agricultural or forestal uses.

Given the substantial adverse impacts of the project—likely permanent loss of prime agricultural soils and the distinct possibility of permanent loss of timberland—the owner should be required by the County to mitigate the adverse impacts through annual payments from the solar facility owner to the County, in addition to the annual taxes paid or revenue sharing provided by the owner. The County attorney should provide direction regarding the best mechanism for securing mitigation payments, such as a siting agreement[ii], special use permit condition, or other mechanism. Mitigation payments should be directed by the County towards the County's land conservation programs, which directly protect the rural land uses (agriculture and forestry) that will likely be forever lost by construction of this project.

The following are PEC's additional recommendations regarding Special Use Permit Conditions.

Erosion and Sediment Control, Grading, and Stormwater Management

The project area involves a number of small streams which feed into Turkey Run and ultimately the James River. Stream health is at severe risk during large land development projects like this one if strong, enforceable conditions are not made a part of the Special Use Permit. The concept plans and associated cut and fill mapping show a complete mass grading of all areas within the proposed fenced perimeter.

All stormwater management design should meet the guidance established by the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality for utility-scale solar facilities:

> "To date, Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) has not required solar projects that are subject to Virginia Stormwater Management

> Program (VSMP) requirements to account for the imperviousness of the solar panels when applying the Commonwealth's post-development stormwater management technical criteria. When performing water quantity (rainfall-runoff) calculations, DEQ's practice has been to consider only the solar panel support posts and beams as impervious areas. However, this approach has the potential to underestimate the post development runoff volume or runoff rate from solar panel arrays, which in turn has the potential to negatively impact downstream waterways or properties. Additionally, the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Chesapeake Bay Program considers the solar panels to be impervious areas for the purposes of performing water quality modeling/calculations for the Chesapeake Bay Total Maximum Daily Load."
>
> - DEQ, Memorandum dated March 29, 2022

Although DEQ does not require this standard to be met by applicants who obtain an interconnection approval by a regional transmission organization or electric utility by December 31, 2024, PEC recommends the County require this more stringent standard in the stormwater management design for this project, to protect the local water quality and prevent excessive stormwater runoff.

PEC also recommends that an independent third party review all stormwater management plans and erosion and sediment control plans in addition to the County's review process. To better ensure the proper design of stormwater management plans and erosion and sediment control plans, the owner should be required to pay for the independent review of these plans by qualified licensed design professionals. Third-party reviewers should be required to submit review comments to the owner and the County.

Additionally, **during construction, the owner should pay for the services of an independent qualified third-party erosion and sediment control inspector, to undertake inspection of the erosion and sediment control measures.** The inspector should be required to prepare construction field reports documenting the work. These reports should be submitted to the owner, the construction contractor, and the County.

Virginia Pollinator-Smart Solar Program

The applicant has submitted a Vegetation Management Plan. This plan includes a discussion of the Virginia Pollinator-Smart Solar program. PEC concurs with the staff recommendation that a condition should be included requiring the project to meet the requirements of the Virginia Pollinator-Smart Solar program. However, **PEC also recommends that the applicant should be required to establish pollinator plants for <u>all disturbed areas</u> of the project area that are not roads or facilities, including all planted buffer areas and all areas of solar panels.**

Vegetation Management Plan and Plants Species

The staff report indicates that "[t]he Vegetation Management Plan sets standards for site preparation, planting, plant establishment, and long-term maintenance. To ensure that vegetation management on the site continues to effectively provide visual screening, environmental benefits, and soil improvements, staff recommends a condition requiring that soil and vegetation management remain in accord with this Vegetation Management Plan for the life of the project." PEC concurs with this recommended condition. **PEC also recommends that all buffer plantings and pollinator plantings be inspected on an annual basis by an independent third-party inspector qualified to assess the health of the existing forested areas that serve as visual buffers, the planted visual buffers, stream buffer vegetation, and pollinator plantings.** The inspector should be required to submit a report documenting inspection findings to the owner and the County. The owner should be required to replant all failed tree, shrub, and pollinator plantings in accordance with the approved site plan or new plantings approved by the County. PEC recommends that all project plantings include only locally or regionally native plants.

The County should include a condition requiring new visual buffer plantings (meeting the design for planted buffers included in the application) where there is loss (due to storms, mortality, disease, climate change, wildfire, etc.) of existing forested areas that were retained to serve as visual buffers.

The County should require, through a condition, that the width of all planted buffers along public roads should be from the right-of-way or centerline of the roadway. In some cases, the current proposed buffer widths are based on property lines on the opposite side of the roadway, thus reducing the buffer width in those locations.

Decommissioning

A procedure to outline the removal of solar equipment and restore the site at the end of the facility's life is critically important. While we are encouraged to see the application narrative include a decommissioning plan, we respectfully note the plan specifies only removing equipment extending three feet below the ground surface. **The removal of the entirety of all above-ground and below-ground equipment, structures, and other improvements is needed so the site may have a greater likelihood of returning to another use at the end of the facility's operation.**

We discourage the County from allowing the subtraction of any anticipated revenue from salvage materials from the financial surety bond, as the future value or market for solar-related salvage is virtually unknowable. The decommissioning plan, as currently written, shows the anticipated salvage value significantly exceeding the total cost of removal.

Thank you for taking the time to review PEC's concerns and recommendations regarding this project. Please feel free to contact me with any questions or requests for additional information.

Sincerely,

Rob McGinnis PLA FASLA
Senior Land Use Field Representative | Albemarle County
rmcginnis@pecva.org
Mobile: 434.962.9110

cc: Board of Supervisors | BOS@albemarle.org

[i] Virginia Cooperative Extension, CE InService Webinar: Utility Scale Solar PV in Virginia, 4th Webinar, recorded October 14, 2020 https://sites.google.com/vt.edu/vceinservice121919solarfarms/home?pli=1

[ii] Localities in Virginia are beginning to negotiate solar siting agreements for facilities over 5 megawatts pursuant to *Code of Virginia* § 15.2-2316.6 et seq. A solar siting agreement can provide important benefits and also protections to the host locality by including terms and conditions that address mitigation of development impacts; through dedication of real property, substantial cash payments, and application of other conditions reasonably related to the project. A solar siting agreement would also be in addition to either the energy revenue share option for solar energy projects, established in state code as HB1131/ SB762 or the Machine & Tool (M&T) tax.

From: scott smith <bookrabbit@hotmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, December 13, 2022 9:51 AM
To: Planning Commission <PlanningCommission@albemarle.org>
Subject: Woodridge Solar

Dear Board of Supervisors, Planning Commission, and Staff,

My name is Scott Smith, and I've lived on Secretarys Road since January 1999. This is our first home. We've worked hard to make our own and expect to live here for many years to come. I've been active in the neighborhood in opposing Patricia Kluge's proposed Vinyard Estates development many years ago, but have been too busy owning and running Bodo's to have been involved in or aware of anything similar since, but I am writing now to voice my strong support for the Woodridge Solar project proposed in our county, and to be built just down the street from me, and I ask that you do all you can to support it as well.

I'm very aware of the County's commitment to a carbon neutral goal, and agree with the board that it is critical that we replace fossil fuels with renewable sources, like solar, absolutely as quickly as possible to combat climate change and steward our environment. Albemarle's Climate Action Plan establishes ambitious and challenging goals to address climate change. Woodridge offers an absolutely indispensable opportunity to make those goals reachable. It would take something like 30,000 new solar homes to match the impact this project is set to have.

The project's commitment to land conservation and clean energy has won a rare Sierra Club endorsement and will be an enormous improvement on the depleting effects of endless use as commercial timberland. Restoring native species also means restoring native habitat and a beneficial mix of trees to land that has been regularly denuded for a century. And the community benefit in low-cost energy is potentially just as valuable.

I live just down Secretarys from the proposed site, and I hope very much to see it approved and developed as soon as possible. Please support the project. It's a vital opportunity.

Sincerely,

Scott Smith

December 4, 2022

Albemarle County Planning Commission
401 McIntire Road
Charlottesville VA 22902

ATTN: Carolyn Shaffer, Clerk
Planning Commission

Kirk A Bowers, PE, Conservation Chair,
Piedmont Group, Virginia Chapter, Sierra Club
Charlottesville, VA
Email: engr1950@gmail.com

SUBJ: Woodridge Solar facility

Dear Planning Commission members,

The Executive Committee (EXCOM) of the Piedmont Group endorses support for the Woodridge solar facility project. The project site is suitable for a solar facility. It would generate power for 25,000 homes, over half of the homes in Albemarle County.

The project supports the goals of the Albemarle County Climate Action Plan to reduce greenhouse gases. The facility fits into the Albemarle County Comprehensive Plan goals and pending updates.

We support the Woodridge Solar project with the condition that the project undergoes a thorough site plan review by Albemarle County before approval. A comprehensive review of the erosion control plans and stormwater management plans is necessary to insure that sediment control and stormwater management meet requirements for runoff control. There are streams and wetlands that will be impacted by site development.

Conceptual plan comments will be submitted prior to the December 13th Commission meeting. There are several items shown in the Concept Plan that need to be resolved before Concept Plan approval.

Thank you for serving Albemarle County.

Sincerely,
Kirk Bowers
Kirk A Bowers, PE
On behalf of the Piedmont Group EXCOM

THISTLEROCK
MEAD COMPANY

The Way of Nature

December 6th, 2022

Albemarle County Planning Commission
401 McIntire Rd
Charlottesville, VA 22902

To the Members of the Albemarle County Planning Commission,

Thistlerock Mead Company is a nature-based farm winery in Albemarle County opening in 2023. We, Thistlerock Mead Company, are writing this letter to express our unwavering support for the Hexagon Woodridge Solar Project. Solar farms provide an opportunity most unique: they can generate energy and save the bees while making wine.

At Thistlerock, we rely on pollinators. Pollinator decline is well documented, as is one of its leading causes – habitat loss. We have read the vegetation plan proposed by Hexagon at the Woodridge site, and as experts on bees and the plants they prefer, we can say without doubt that this solar project will help pollinators in Albemarle County. By planting native wildflowers and other flowering species, native pollinators such as mason bees, monarch butterflies, and hummingbirds will all see benefit. Hexagon will be providing diverse and nutritious nectar, pollen, and nesting shelter for these critical species.

When you plant hundreds of acres of flowers, there's enough goodness to go around. Our honeybees are also able to share in the advantages of the solar project. In Virginia, beekeepers usually experience a drop in colony growth in the summer. This time is referred to as the "dearth" meaning nectar to make honey is in short supply. At a site like the Woodridge site, where the bees have access to the trees surrounding the streams and project buffers in the spring, and wildflower meadows in the summer, there will be no "dearth". We are delighted to have signed a LOI with Hexagon to place honeybee hives at the Woodridge site for the purpose of mead production. The honey harvested from the hives in Albemarle County will go into delicious honey wine which we hope – one day – to share with the world. Not only does this promote Albemarle agriculture, but it's also a job creator, as hive management could be a full-time job, which trickles to mead makers and servers.

Our passion lies in creating high-quality value-added nature to bottle products in Virginia, while also having a positive impact on our environment. The Woodridge Solar Project is parallel and a perfect partner in our mission. Albemarle needs this project to move forward.

Sincerely,

The Team at Thistlerock Mead Company

John W. Kluge

John Kluge
Co-Founder and CEO

Doug Suchan
Co-Founder and Head Mead Maker

Allison Wickham
Co-Founder and Beekeeper

2386 Fiddlers Rdg
Scottsville, VA 24590

December 12, 2022

Dear Members of the Planning Commission –

I am writing to express both my support for and some concerns about the proposed Woodridge Solar Project.

My farm is at the end of Fiddlers Ridge, a 1-mile-long driveway off Secretary's Rd (close to the eastern end of the road), and the solar project will directly abut a substantial portion of my property's southwestern boundary.

I am strongly in favor of solar energy as a partial solution to our dependence on fossil fuels and their contribution to climate problems, and I applaud the commission and Albemarle County for tackling these issues. I also was very impressed with Hexagon's stated commitment to environmental stewardship – in particular, the establishment of substantial interconnected wildlife-friendly buffer zones and their desire to restore a healthy ecosystem to an area ravaged by clearcutting.

As someone with an intense interest in supporting biodiversity and restoring the native Piedmont ecosystem, I have been trying to control or ideally eliminate the most troublesome of the invasive alien species that have gained a foothold in my pasture and forest, and I want to be sure that the good intentions expressed in the project descriptions are supported with a solid plan for action and accountability.

An example of what I am worried about: Japanese stiltgrass is one example of an invasive species that I am battling. I spend substantial amounts of time weeding, mowing, "weed-eating," and spraying to try to get control of this aggressive species, which has completely displaced forage grasses in some sections of pasture and is thriving in parts of my forest and along my stream and areas of storm run-off. If the soil disruption that occurs as part of the solar project is not properly managed, stiltgrass could easily become a dominant species there, spreading seed to my farm and undoing the work that I am doing to restore the habitat here on my property.

Thus my concern is for habitat remediation and maintenance in general but also specifically, and more selfishly, for the effect on my own land.

That said, this seems like a solvable problem. We just need to be sure that whatever agreement you arrive at has "teeth" in it – and that it will survive any potential transfer of ownership.

Thank you,

Anne Stanford
2386 Fiddlers Rdg
Scottsville, VA 24590
Anne.stanford@gmail.com

BRUCE SULLIVAN
18 ORCHARD ROAD
CHARLOTTESVILLE, VIRGINIA 22903-4727

December 13, 2022

Mr. Frederick Missel
Planning Commission – Scotttsville District
County of Albemarle, Virginia
401 McIntire Road
Charlottesville, VA 22902

Via electronic mail

Re: Woodridge Solar – Application for Special Use Permit

Dear Mr. Missel

You may recall I reached out to you at the end of May trying to learn more about the Woodridge Solar Project. At the time, my 96 year-old mother and I had concerns about the project. I believe you asked the planning staff to contact me. Vivian Groeschel sent me an email with numerous links to the county's web page. There I found an extensive amount of information about the project. After reviewing that information, I met with Scott Remer, Director of Development for Hexagon Energy.

In the meeting, I explained to Scott that we had two primary concerns. Number one – how would we share the expense of maintaining Eyeland Drive. Eyeland Drive is essentially a very long driveway to my mother's house. Number two – How would Woodridge Solar visually shield their facility from the driveway. Over the past several months, Scott and I have corresponded, talked and met numerous times. We have come to an agreement (in writing) that I believe more than protects my mother's interests. I have also had the opportunity to meet and talk with Drew Price, Hexagon's president. My feeling is Hexagon and Woodridge Solar genuinely want to be a good neighbor and a responsible member of the community.

In broader terms, I support this project because I believe it is the right thing to do. It appears most of this land has not been well cared for. If the project does not proceed, there is a good chance other uses of the parcels may be detrimental to the land and surrounding community. If approved and completed, the proposed project has a number of positive attributes for the Woodridge/Blenhiem community. More importantly, Albemarle County has the chance to be a good global citizen. We can lead by example, and show others that, done properly, large scale solar projects benefit many – in the local community and beyond.

In summary, I ask that you and the other members of the planning commission recommend to the Board of Supervisors that they approve Woodridge Solar's application for a special use permit application. Thank you for your consideration of my opinions and for your service to Albemarle County.

Sincerely,

Bruce Sullivan

Copy to other members of the Planning Commission

REPORT **JULY 2022**

Woodridge Solar

Preliminary Policy Report

PREPARED BY

Claudia Aiken

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Hexagon Energy is seeking a Special Use Permit to build Woodridge Solar, a utility-scale photovoltaic project, on a former pine timber farm in the southeastern portion of Albemarle County. The definition of "utility-scale solar" varies by source, but its distinguishing factors are the amount of solar energy generated (a common threshold is 5 megawatts) and the fact that power is sold wholesale to utilities, rather than being net-metered like the "distributed solar" projects installed on residential rooftops. Thus, utility-scale solar projects often compete with other generators—such as coal and gas plants—in the wholesale power market.[1] Woodridge Solar would be capable of generating 138 megawatts (for reference, there are only 11 projects capable of generating over 50 megawatts in Virginia, out of 51 total utility-scale projects as of 2021).[2] This is enough energy to power approximately 25,000 homes (more than half of Albemarle County's approximately 42,300 occupied homes).[3] It would involve the installation of 650 acres of solar panels on a privately-owned property and have a lifetime of approximately 35 years.[4]

1 Urban Grid. "What is Utility-Scale Solar? An Overview." Website. Accessed July 17, 2022. https://www.urbangridsolar.com/what-is-utility-scale-solar-an-overview/

2 Carrie Hearne, Aaron Berryhill, and Elizabeth Marshall. Virginia Solar Survey: Results and Initial Findings. Virginia Department of Energy and the Virginia Solar Initiative at the Weldon Cooper Center for Public Service, University of Virginia, April 2022. https://solar.coopercenter.org/sites/solar/files/media/files/2022-05/VASolarSurveyReport_Complete_2022-05-18_Updated.pdf

3 U.S. Census Bureau. "Occupied Housing Units, Albemarle County." American Community Survey 2020 five-year estimates.

4 Hexagon Energy. Woodridge Solar. Website. Accessed July 16, 2022. https://www.woodridgesolar.com/

PRELIMINARY ANALYSIS

Political

Political arguments for and against a given intervention are important to consider because C3's mission is to catalyze action to confront climate change, not just among residents and businesses but also among public officials. Endorsing a politically unpopular project could deal a blow to C3's relationship with the community and/or with policymakers.

PROS

- Albemarle County has adopted clear greenhouse gas (GHG) emission reduction targets, including to reduce emissions by 45% below 2008 levels by 2030 and to achieve net zero emissions by 2050.[5] This project promises to increase constituents' confidence in the efficacy of their government in meeting its climate goals. Hexagon Energy estimates that Woodridge Solar alone would "allow Albemarle County to meet over 20% of its 2050 net-zero electricity emissions reduction goals."[6] If approved, Woodridge Solar will be the second utility-scale solar project to receive a Special Use Permit in Albemarle, but by far the largest—the other facility (located near Batesville) will generate only 8 megawatts of solar energy.[7]

- The company proposing to develop the project, Hexagon Energy, is a local company with offices in Downtown Charlottesville and employs about 20 people. The spokesperson for the project, Scott Remer, lives in Crozet with his family. This is an important political advantage, since Hexagon is unlikely to be seen as an outsider despite developing most of its previous projects in New England.[8]

CONS

- Albemarle County's Climate Action Plan states that the County will support utility-scale solar projects when there are public benefits, but that it will "strive to maintain a holistic perspective that accounts for climate benefits and the health of our local ecosystem" and that it will therefore "prioritize roof tops, parking lots, brownfields, landfills, and post-industrial or other open lands over forested or ecologically valuable lands for siting utility-scale renewable energy installations."[9] The proposed site for Woodridge Solar is partially forested and is also traversed by multiple waterways. While it is far from a pristine natural ecosystem because of its long use as a commercial timber farm, the parcel is not as obviously degraded as a parking lot or former industrial site. This could empower critics to argue that Woodridge Solar is not an appropriate use for the County's Rural Areas.

- Approving Woodridge Solar's Special Use Permit could set a poor precedent for building utility-scale solar on low-cost rural land and set up future competitions between solar and agricultural uses or encourage the destruction of old-growth forests and other prime natural resources.

5 Albemarle County. Climate Action Plan. October 2020. https://www.albemarle.org/home/showpublished-document/5432/637382865947300000

6 Hexagon Energy. Woodridge Solar. Website. Accessed July 16, 2022. https://www.woodridgesolar.com/

7 Charlotte Rene Woods. "A Proposed Solar Farm in Albemarle Could Power More than Half the County's Homes." Charlottesville Tomorrow. July 8, 2022. https://www.cvilletomorrow.org/articles/a-proposed-solar-farm-in-albemarle-could-power-more-than-half-the-countys-homes/

8 Albemarle County. Woodridge Solar Community Meeting. June 29, 2022. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=biZWzQSdz5c

9 Albemarle County. Climate Action Plan, p.36. October 2020. https://www.albemarle.org/home/showpublisheddocument/5432/637382865947300000

PROS

- The site is located far from cities or towns, so it will directly impact comparatively few residents with respect to traffic during construction or visual impact once built. Hexagon Energy has already made important concessions to residents who live near and will be directly impacted by the project, including by initiating discussions to renew the license of the local Woodridge Sportsmen's Club to hunt on the property and arranging solar arrays to avoid Monticello's viewshed.

- The timing of the proposal is propitious. The Virginia Clean Economy Act (VCEA) went into effect in 2020 and paved the way for utility-scale solar by reducing limits on the amount of energy that renewable energy companies can produce within territories served by utility companies like Dominion Energy. But the stress of such projects for existing infrastructure led PJM, the company that manages the region's electric grid, to announce a two-year moratorium on new energy projects requiring interconnections.[10] Woodridge Solar escaped the moratorium and expects to receive PJM's authorization for interconnection later this year. This will allow the project, if approved by the county, to move forward quickly; Hexagon estimates it could be completed as soon as next year.[11] Meanwhile, federal progress towards climate protection has stalled because of Sen. Manchin's resistance—potentially creating an even larger appetite for local action.

10 Ibid, n.7.
11 Ibid, n.8.

CONS

- The Woodridge Solar site wraps around several residential properties located along Secretarys Road north of Scottsville. Some of the residential property owners are strongly opposed to the project because it threatens to lower their property values and produce glare. Some voiced a conspiracy theory at a community meeting that the timber farm operators "sabotaged" the site by dousing it in herbicides in order to make its conversion to a solar farm more palatable and make the parcel's sale to Hexagon more profitable.[12]

12 Ibid, n.8.

Environmental

The principal argument in favor of developing solar projects is an environmental one—they produce energy without releasing the GHGs that are emitted when burning fossil fuels and therefore contribute much less to the warming of the Earth's climate. Unchecked, climate change promises to increase the frequency and severity of natural disasters, cause sea levels to rise, and have devastating impacts on biodiversity and agriculture. Yet individual solar projects impose a variety of environmental costs. C3 must weigh Woodridge Solar's capacity to reduce GHG emissions against its impacts on the site's natural resources.

In doing so, it is important to consider the most probable counterfactual for Woodridge Solar. It will replace power production from the retired Bremo combined coal and gas plant, which was located on the James River in Fluvanna County and was demolished in 2022.[13] In the absence of Woodridge Solar, the energy deficit would likely be made up in the form of a natural gas-fired power plant. Dominion Energy has built two large new gas plants since 2016 and plans to add several more, even as electricity demand in Virginia has flattened.[14]

13 Ibid, n.8.

14 Richard Martin and Darren Sweeney. "Overpowered: In Virginia, Dominion Faces Challenges to Its Reign." S&P Global Market Intelligence. December 4, 2019. https://www.spglobal.com/marketintelligence/en/news-insights/latest-news-headlines/overpowered-in-virginia-dominion-faces-challenges-to-its-reign-54171542

PROS

- Even accounting for the full lifecycle of a solar facility (including the manufacture of the panels and construction of the facility), it has a far lower carbon footprint than a gas plant with carbon capture and storage.[15] Woodridge Solar would contribute significantly to lowering Albemarle County's emissions and its impact on the climate.

15 Michaja Pehl et al. 2017. "Understanding Future Emissions from Low-Carbon Power Systems by Integration of Life-Cycle Assessment and Integrated Energy Modeling." Nature Energy 2: 939-945. https://www.nature.com/articles/s41560-017-0032-9

CONS

- Utility-scale solar generates far less power per acre of disturbed land as compared to another form of renewable energy—nuclear. "Existing utility-scale solar facilities [in the State of Virginia] can generate about 20% of the annual electricity generated by the North Anna Nuclear Power Station on a similar area of disturbed land."[16] That said, the degree of disturbance is very different—North Anna required land to be submerged under Lake Anna to cool the reactors, while utility-scale solar has a much less durable footprint.

16 Aaron Berryhill. Utility-Scale Solar in Virginia: An Analysis of Land Use and Development Trends. Prepared for the Virginia Department of Mines, Minerals, and Energy. Virginia Commonwealth University, 2021, p.21. https://scholarscompass.vcu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1043&context=murp_capstone

PROS

- The site has been used for approximately 80 years as a commercial timber farm. The pine forest is harvested periodically, which releases carbon stored in the plants. Timber farming depletes the soil and has eroded it in places, creating channels that allow for rapid stormwater runoff into the Hardware River and ultimately the James. Timber farmers typically also spray the harvested land with herbicide to discourage the growth of blackberries and other full-sun plants that will compete with the next generation of pines.[17] This activity causes environmental damage and poses risks to public health that will no longer occur if the solar farm proposal moves forward.

- Hexagon Energy has proposed several measures to restore the site, including creating a 200-ft setback from all property lines that will be partially reforested, partially planted with a native pollinator-friendly meadow mix; avoiding installing panels within 10 ft of water; installing only gravel access roads; and potentially using sheep to graze the grass around the panels rather than mowing.[18]

17 Ingrid Lobet. "In Oregon, Residents Struggle to Solve a Pesticide Mystery." The Atlantic, August 14, 2012. https://www.theatlantic.com/national/archive/2012/08/in-oregon-residents-struggle-to-solve-a-pesticide-mystery/261083/

18 Ibid, n.4.

CONS

- The solar facility is predicted to have a lifespan of only 35 years (though this is comparable to that of gas-fired power plants, it is shorter than some other renewable sources, including hydro- or nuclear power).[19] Hexagon Energy states that the solar panels are made from 90% recyclable materials, but this is no guarantee that they will indeed be recycled. Further, this does not account for the materials required for the multiple inverters and Dominion substation necessitated by the project.

- The solar arrays will be fenced, presumably for security reasons. Hexagon will fence the arrays "tightly" such that wildlife can still move through the site, but the amount of contiguous habitat will likely decrease significantly compared to the earlier pine forest.

- Woodridge Solar may negatively affect biodiversity in other ways, including by generating noise (while the panels make no sound, each inverter is comparable to a residential air conditioning unit in terms of noise production, and there will be significant noise associated with construction and mowing, if necessary); by compacting the soil in a way that causes burrow collapse; and by introducing roads that fragment habitat and cause wildlife fatalities.[20] A more thorough analysis would consider whether there are protected species that might be threatened by the project.

- The inverters needed to convert the direct current the solar panels generate into the alternating current used by the electrical grid emit a low level of electromagnetic field (EMF) radiation. However, all humans are exposed to EMF throughout daily life without observable negative health impacts. There is no proof that solar farms cause health issues.

19 Office of Nuclear Energy. "What's the Lifespan for a Nuclear Reactor? Much Longer than You Might Think." April 16, 2020. https://www.energy.gov/ne/articles/whats-lifespan-nuclear-reactor-much-longer-you-might-think

20 Jeffrey E. Lovich and Joshua R. Ennen. 2011. "Wildlife Conservation and Solar Energy Development in the Desert Southwest, United States." BioScience 61 (12): 982-992. https://academic.oup.com/bioscience/article/61/12/982/392612

Economic

Economic considerations are also important to C3's calculus. If Woodridge Solar can show that it will generate economic benefits—in the form of affordable energy costs, good jobs, tax revenue, etc.—to the County and its residents, it may strengthen the link between renewable energy, prosperity, and equity, and thereby encourage further climate action. C3 also works directly with local businesses to encourage GHG reductions; its credibility with the business community may be damaged if it endorses a project that proves insolvent or is otherwise economically unsound.

PROS

- Hexagon predicts that the project will generate millions in tax revenue for the County because the land use shift will trigger an increase in real estate tax payments and because the County will either impose a tax rate per megawatt or enter into a revenue-sharing agreement.[21] This revenue can be used for other climate-friendly investments, for instance in the bus fleet.

- Hexagon Energy is required to finance a bond that covers the full cost of decommissioning the solar facility at the end of its lifespan.[22] The relatively low-impact nature of the facility will make it far easier to return the site to an agricultural or other appropriate use post-decommissioning, compared to if the site were used for a fossil fuel or nuclear plant.

- The cost of solar energy has been decreasing and studies show that solar power purchase agreement (PPA) prices are "now often competitive with wind PPA prices, as well as the cost of burning fuel in existing gas-fired generators."[23] Further, solar may work to stabilize electric prices and keep them low in the long-term because of their far greater predictability than fossil fuel costs.[24]

21 Ibid, n.8.
22 Ibid, n.8.
23 Mark Bolinger, Joachim Seel, Cody Warner, and Dana Robinson. Utility-Scale Solar, 2021 Edition. Report. Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory, October 2021. https://emp.lbl.gov/sites/default/files/utility_scale_solar_2021_edition_slides.pdf
24 Kylie McCalmont. "Three Benefits of Utility-Scale Solar that Will Make You Want to Invest." EnergyLink, July 8, 2022. https://goenergylink.com/blog/3-benefits-of-utility-scale-solar/

CONS

- Hexagon estimates that the project will create over 250 jobs during construction, but only five workers will be supported for the life of the project. This is likely a lower level of employment than would be created by equal capacity in distributed solar, or by a gas-powered plant.

- It is unclear based on the available project information whether Woodridge Solar uses fixed-tilt panels or incorporates solar tracking technology. Projects with tracking technology have come to dominate new utility-scale solar (accounting for 89% of all new capacity in 2020); the cost premium for tracking projects has fallen over time.[25] If Woodridge Solar is a fixed-tilt project, it may already be outdated and will be forgoing an opportunity to generate more electricity on less land.

25 Ibid, n.23.

PROS

- Analysis shows that solar projects generating 100 megawatts or more cost 17% less than small projects (5-20 megawatts) per megawatt of installed capacity. This means that Woodridge Solar is taking advantage of significant economies of scale and delivering energy at a lower cost than the same number of panels distributed across more land.[26]

26 Ibid, n.23.

CONS

- It is also unclear whether the proposal involves a battery storage facility. If not, the power produced will not be "dispatchable," i.e., able to adjust output to the electrical grid on demand. But if so, Hexagon must purchase lithium-ion batteries during a lithium supply crisis that is driving over 400% year-over-year price increases.[27]

27 Emily Barone. "Lithium Is the Key to the Electric Vehicle Supply Transition. It's Also in Short Supply." Time Magazine, May 26, 2022. https://time.com/6182044/electric-vehicle-battery-lithium-shortage/

PRELIMINARY RECOMMENDATION

Based on strong political and environmental arguments in its favor, I recommend that the Board of Supervisors to grant a Special Use Permit to Hexagon Energy for the construction of the Woodridge Solar facility. The benefit to Albemarle County residents in the form of GHG reductions and potential tax revenue outweigh the adverse impacts to neighboring residents and local wildlife. The most plausible counterfactual is a gas-powered plant, which would have far greater negative impacts on neighboring residents and local wildlife with none of the climate benefits. Further, the proposal is politically advantageous given the County's pressing climate goals, the moratorium on additional renewable energy projects, and the stalemate at the federal level.

From: Caetano de Campos Lopes <caetano@theclimatecollaborative.org>
Sent: Tuesday, December 13, 2022 11:51 AM
To: Planning Commission <PlanningCommission@albemarle.org>
Cc: Katie Ebinger <katie@theclimatecollaborative.org>; Susan Kruse <susan@theclimatecollaborative.org>; Carolyn Shaffer <cshaffer2@albemarle.org>
Subject: AC Planning Commission - Woodridge Solar Development

Dear Albemarle County Planning Commission,

The Community Climate Collaborative (C3) is writing in support of granting a special-use permit to the Woodridge Solar Development for the substation and solar farm requests.

Solar energy is a vital part of our low-carbon future and it has the potential to bring economic and health benefits to Virginia. We are excited by Hexagon Energy's 138 MW plan at Woodridge, which we expect will produce jobs, generate higher tax revenue, and prevent greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and air pollution from sites like coal-fired power plants.

C3's team created an analysis of the project (the full report will be released soon) and we wanted to highlight the following:

-
-
- **Climate Justice:**
- The Woodridge project scored highly on the promotion of climate justice, a topic that C3
- analyzed by aggregating and comparing the best practices in procedural, distributional, and restorative justice.
-
    -
    -
    - The project effectively engaged local environmental groups, which resulted in a well-thought-out
    - design that centers ecosystem health throughout each stage of the development process.
    -
    -
    -
    - Community outreach could have been improved by including more language offerings and compensation
    - for community members' participation/input. As the project progresses, including the voices of community members who have otherwise been unengaged in this project will be important.
    -
    -
    -

- Overall, Hexagon went beyond Albemarle County's required community engagement, and feedback elicited
- from neighbors through this process was ultimately included in the proposed project design.
-

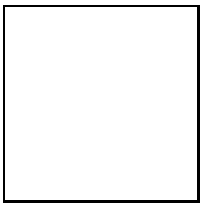
-
-
- **Climate Change Mitigation:**
- The project is expected to reduce carbon emissions and have a net climate change mitigating
- effect.
-
    -
    -
    - We estimate that in the first year of operations, the clean energy directly created from the project
    - will result in roughly 127,000 US
    - tons of GHG emissions mitigated.
    -
    -
    -
    - Additionally, the proximity to existing electric power transmission lines, in the case of the Woodridge
    - site, makes the location of this site a strategic choice. When new transmission lines are built to connect the solar farms with the grid, significant deforestation might follow. For every mile of a new transmission line not constructed, the project could prevent
    - clearing 5,460 to 14,520 trees.
    -

After our analysis, C3 is excited by the climate mitigation potential of this project as well as the thoughtful attention paid to protecting the environment and informing the public of the site. **We urge County Supervisors and the Planning Commission to support the project to benefit our local community and global climate health.**

Sincerely,
Caetano de Campos Lopes

PS: We will share our full report/analysis with you shortly.

--



Caetano de Campos Lopes
Director of Climate Policy, Community Climate Collaborative
cel. (434) 466-6345
theclimatecollaborative.org

From: Charlie Armstrong <CharlesA@southern-development.com>
Sent: Monday, December 5, 2022 3:03 PM
To: Alberic Karina-Plun <akplun@albemarle.org>; Andy Herrick <aherrick@albemarle.org>; Bart Svoboda <bsvoboda@albemarle.org>; Carolyn Shaffer <cshaffer2@albemarle.org>; Corey Clayborne <cclayborne@albemarle.org>; Cynthia Hudson <chudson2@albemarle.org>; David Benish <DBENISH@albemarle.org>; Doug Walker <dwalker3@albemarle.org>; Francis MacCall <FMACCALL@albemarle.org>; Frederick Missel <fmissel@albemarle.org>; Jessica Hersh-Ballering <jhballering@albemarle.org>; Jodie Filardo <jfilardo@albemarle.org>; Julian Bivins <jbivins@albemarle.org>; Karen Firehock <kfirehock@albemarle.org>; Kevin McDermott <kmcdermott@albemarle.org>; Lonnie Murray <lmurray@albemarle.org>; Luis Carrazana <lcarrazana1@albemarle.org>; Luis Carrazana <lac2z@virginia.edu>; Patricia Smith <psmith@uvafoundation.com>; Rebecca Ragsdale <rragsdale@albemarle.org>; Tori Kanellopoulos <vkanellopoulos@albemarle.org>; Vivian Groeschel <vgroeschel@albemarle.org>
Subject: Woodridge Solar

Dear Planning Commissioners,

I'm a County resident. I use electricity. At my house I have a 14kW solar array that offsets about 90% of my usage. I did not have good rooftop solar orientation, and preferred to keep some trees around my house, so I had to compromise some of my yard space in order to be able reduce my electricity usage and carbon footprint. The greater goal justified the sacrifice of land. That was 5 years ago and I've never for a single day regretted allowing my solar panels to occupy a portion of my yard. And Dominion Energy is kind enough to remind me monthly that I use almost no energy (and that my investment pays dividends every single daylight hour).

Albemarle County (as a whole) uses a lot of electricity. Some residents individually mitigate some of their electrical impact. Others don't. Many can't. Utility scale solar projects like the one proposed by Hexagon are a major critical component to any plan to ween off of domestic fossil fuels, reduce carbon emissions, improve utility grid stability, reduce dependence on commodities outside our control, and even to improve geopolitical stability. At every level of political subdivision we should be striving to do our part: globally, nationally, statewide, and at the county level.

The news reports say this project alone would provide the equivalent of half of the electricity that is consumed in all of Albemarle. All it takes is about 1/10 of a percent (0.001) of the County's total land area to do that. Imagine if we were to dedicate 1/3 of one percent (0.003) of the County's land to projects like this—we could produce ALL of the power used in Albemarle and Charlottesville combined, right here at home. We would not import a single watt from outside our County. That really would be amazing. "*My county runs on 100% clean energy*" sounds pretty good. Something I would brag about. This one project could get us halfway to that!!

We find it valuable to occupy some of our land with reservoirs and water treatment facilities so that we can have sustainable local drinking water. Yet we have no electrical power plants. We import our power from power plants in adjacent counties, which import their generating fuel from uranium mines and gas wells in West Virginia, Pennsylvania, and Louisiana. It is irresponsible and hypocritical to import dirty

fuel from a thousand miles away when we can instead harvest clean energy from the sun right here at home.

Here is an opportunity to do our part. This proposal is a gift.

These projects are often derailed because of well-organized and often wealthy political opposition. People who oppose them cite all kinds of reasons. Many are red herrings. Some are valid, but must be weighed against the enormity of what would be achieved by this project. It would be unacceptable for Albemarle to allow a few loud voices, some of which are almost certain to be "anti change" people masquerading as environmentalists, to distract you from the local and global good that can come from sourcing our electricity from sustainable renewable energy sources like solar.

We talk a good talk here in Albemarle. We claim to be progressive. We have a climate action plan. But do we only prioritize global warming and clean air via our words or do we tackle it via our actions? Do we just continue to buy our energy from the gas fields of the Gulf of Mexico or do we solve that problem right here? Do we acknowledge that solutions can still be incredibly good even if imperfect? If we're honest about what it takes to do what we say we want, we should be very careful not to look for reasons to say no to projects like Hexagon's. We should always be looking for ways to say yes. Like I did in my own yard, Albemarle needs to dedicate a tiny percentage of its land to achieve this important goal. You can enthusiastically support this even if it still has a couple of warts, most of which can probably be worked out during final site plan review. And after this and maybe one or two more like it get built, you will feel pretty good knowing that your home's electricity comes from right here in Albemarle.

Sincerely,
Charlie Armstrong

CHARLIE ARMSTRONG | Vice President
O 434.245.0894 x 108
carmstrong@southern-development.com

SOUTHERN DEVELOPMENT HOMES
southern-development.com

2010 - 2021 Daily Progress Readers' Choice Favorite Builder
2010 - 2021 Charlottesville Family Favorite Builder
2017 - 2019 Best of C-ville #1 Homebuilder

From: Christine Putnam <chirshputnam@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, December 12, 2022 9:12 PM
To: Planning Commission <PlanningCommission@albemarle.org>
Subject: Woodridge Solar Project

Dear Members of the Planning Commission,

I live on Secretarys Rd on a parcel of land that will be surrounded by the proposed solar project. I understand the need for alternative energy sources to address climate change. That said, I would rather see solar installations on brownfields and on rooftops, but I also understand that the Woodridge site has some advantages given its proximity to a transmission line with open capacity to carry the generated electricity.

As the chair of the Albemarle County Natural Heritage Committee and a citizen who is deeply concerned about the protection of our natural resources, I am particularly concerned about the impact this solar project will have on the land. I want to commend Scott Remer for listening to these concerns and the commitment Hexagon has made to restoring native vegetation and protecting stream buffers. I have read the Vegetative Management Plan for this project. It is a sound plan that relies on active monitoring in order to be successful. I know how difficult it is to establish plant cover on these acidic soils which have been impacted by decades of industrial timber production. This job will be made even more difficult due to the intensive grading that will have to take place under and around the panels. One can only hope that after the soil amendments have been added and the seed is dispersed that the weather will cooperate to create a thriving vegetative cover. But there is the real possibility that the weather will not cooperate, that there will be places where the seed does not take, and where invasive plants will take hold. This is why a third party professional is needed to make sure the vegetative management plan is properly implemented and monitored not only during the first few years, but throughout the life of the project. The developer should provide funds for this monitoring and any needed remediation. We can not expect County staff or neighboring citizens to take on this responsibility. If we want to see the land restored to support a biodiverse landscape of native plants which will in turn support pollinators, birds and other wildlife, active monitoring must take place.

With a project of this size, there is a lot at stake. We need to make sure we get it right. The County is in the process of hiring a consultant to help write an ordinance for utility-scale solar. A model ordinance should require that all utility-scale solar projects meet the Virginia PollinatorSmart Solar Certification criteria and that the projects are properly monitored. Before approving the Woodridge project, I hope that the County will either wait until a model ordinance is in place or require monitoring to ensure that the vegetative management plan is properly implemented and monitored.

Thank you for your consideration,

Christine Putnam
2086 Secretarys Rd
Scottsville, VA 23490

December 13, 2022

Albemarle County Planning Commission
401 McIntire Road
Charlottesville VA 22902

Re: Woodridge Solar Project - Special Use Permit Application – Recommend Approval

Dear Members of the Albemarle County Planning Commission:

I am writing to express support for the Woodridge Solar Project, and encourage the Planning Commission to find that it is in conformance with Albemarle County's Comprehensive Plan and recommend approval of the Special Use Permit Application for the project.

The Project will benefit Albemarle County by providing needed economic development and both short-term and long-term employment, by increasing tax revenue, by providing other economic benefits to the area, and by making effective long-term use of the land consistent with its owners' wishes. Furthermore, the project will generate significant amounts of clean, efficient renewable energy for Virginia electric customers, and will help meet goals of both the County's Climate Action Plan, and the Virginia State Energy Plan. The proposed solar project is unobtrusive, properly located and well-thought-out, and includes proper setbacks and vegetative buffers, in compliance with and in some cases exceeding requirements in both the County's Comprehensive Plan and Zoning Ordinance. As such it provides significant benefits to the County and its residents while at the same time not disrupting the rural nature of the area nor the enjoyment of the surrounding property.

I would also remind the Planning Commission of the intense level of environmental regulatory scrutiny such projects attract, having to comply with all manner of State and Federal regulations, ensuring environmental and resource protection. In particular the project will provide extensive erosion and sedimentation and storm water control measures to comply with Virginia state regulations, thereby protecting soils and water quality far better than what the current mostly uncontrolled clearcutting of the site provides (as happens routinely across the County and State). The project's participation with the Virginia Pollinator-Smart program will transform a barren clear-cut site into a productive solar farm with good groundcover and a thriving ecosystem in buffer areas that supports pollinator species, birds, and other wildlife while improving water quality and soil conditions.

I am an Albemarle County resident and have extensive experience in design and development of large scale solar farms, wind farms, and other power generation facilities, having worked in the renewable energy sector for most of my career. I know a good project when I see one and I am thrilled for Albemarle County's opportunity to assist this project in moving forward, thereby become more self-sustaining in contributing to the County's energy needs. I further commend the planning staff for their thorough review of this application and proper recommendation for approval.

I thank you for approving the Woodridge Solar Project's permit applications and allowing it, and Albemarle County, to move forward.

Sincerely,

David A. Stoner

6858 Rockfish Gap Turnpike
Greenwood, VA 22943
434-227-2105
davidastoner1@gmail.com
www.stonerpowerconsulting.com

Cc: Ann Mallek
Bill Fritz

From: Dolores Dwyer <joydotter@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, December 12, 2022 1:03:37 PM
To: Carolyn Shaffer <cshaffer2@albemarle.org>
Subject: statement for Dec. 13 meeting

Dear Ms. Shaffer,

I plan to attend tomorrow evening's Planning Commission meeting to make a brief statement regarding the proposed Woodridge Solar project. Do I need a link or password other than what appears on the Albemarle County web site?

Following is a draft of my comments:

My name is Dolores Dwyer and I live in Alberene, a community just about due west of the proposed Woodridge solar site. I am generally in favor of new solar farms as long as they do not cause environmental damage or have other negative effects. Given current information, I support this specific proposal, for its projected clean energy production, for the soil remediation plans to help to offset any potential effects of removing trees from the terrain, and for its required stormwater management. I also applaud Hexagon for its plan to maintain a place for wildlife and for hunting.

Any awarding of Special Use Permits ought to involve the following:
-- Transparency regarding any additional costs to ratepayers or tax abatements
-- Provisions for oversight on soil remediation, stormwater management, and other promises made by Hexagon Energy throughout the approval process.
-- Opportunities for training, paid internships, and employment for residents of the surrounding communities in solar panel installation, soil and other land management sciences, and related fields.

I also urge the Planning Commission and the BOS to assess the county in terms of deforestation, and determine if and where new trees might be planted to offset their removal elsewhere.

Thank you for listening.
--
Dolores Dwyer
joydotter@gmail.com

From: Kat Maybury <katmaybury@yahoo.com>
Sent: Friday, December 9, 2022 6:07 PM
To: Karen Firehock <kfirehock@albemarle.org>; Corey Clayborne <cclayborne@albemarle.org>; Julian Bivins <jbivins@albemarle.org>; Frederick Missel <fmissel@albemarle.org>; Lonnie Murray <lmurray@albemarle.org>; Luis Carrazana <lac2z@virginia.edu>
Cc: Carolyn Shaffer <cshaffer2@albemarle.org>; Planning Commission <PlanningCommission@albemarle.org>
Subject: Woodridge Solar + Vegetation Mgmt Plan

Dear Commissioners:

I'm writing to express my support for the Woodridge Solar project which I understand you'll be discussing on December 13. In particular, I want to comment on the project's Vegetation Management Plan because I feel I have the most to offer in terms of expertise and experience when it comes to that aspect of the project.

While I am not a landscape designer, and can't address every aspect of the plan, I have over 20 years of experience in biodiversity conservation, focusing on plant species. I also have some personal, hands-on experience with the difficulties of re-establishing native grasses and forbes on a site with nutrient-poor, acidic soil.

I believe the vegetation plan is well thought out and, assuming it is implemented appropriately, will provide a great number of ecological benefits, including early-to-late-season pollinator food sources, bird habitat and food resources, and erosion control for water quality.

I was impressed with the variety of native species chosen for each zone, with species that could tolerate extremely dry conditions as well as those tolerant of boggy soils. This should provide flexibility when planting the shrubs and resiliency in the overall seeding mix.

The non-native plants to be used for specific purposes (e.g., sheep grazing, temporary seeding) seem to have been chosen with care and intention.

The current use of the site is industrial timber (for a species not native to this part of the Piedmont). Given the huge green energy benefits of the Woodridge Solar project, this vegetation plan seems to be an additional strong reason to support it. The revegetation and management of the site according to the proposed plan would be a net plus for Albemarle County's ecological and biological diversity.

Thank you,
Kat

Kat Maybury
4877 Browns Gap Tpke
Crozet, VA 22932
katmaybury@yahoo.com
(571) 236-6944 *(cell)*

From: Kathryn Bertoni <kat.trent.bertoni@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, December 12, 2022 7:06 PM
To: Planning Commission <PlanningCommission@albemarle.org>
Subject: Woodbridge Solar Project

Dear Commissioners,

I am writing in support of the Woodbridge Solar Project to be considered at the Planning Commission meeting tomorrow, 12/13/2022. This project is consistent with the county's climate and land use goals and will provide an opportunity for Albemarle County to establish itself as a leader in Virginia for large scale utility solar projects.

In order to make progress towards the area climate goals, both Charlottesville and surrounding localities must make a commitment to these bold, at-scale projects.

Thank you,
Kathryn Bertoni

December 8, 2022

Albemarle County Planning Commission
401 McIntire Road
Charlottesville VA 22902

ATTN: Carolyn Shaffer, Clerk
Planning Commission

Kirk A Bowers, PE, Conservation Chair,
Piedmont Group, Virginia Chapter, Sierra Club
Charlottesville, VA
Email: engr1950@gmail.com

SUBJ: Woodridge Solar facility

Dear Planning Commission members,

We support approval of the Woodridge Solar concept plan and SUP with the following recommendations:

1. Include specifications in the construction plans to:

- Minimize construction-related compaction,
- ensure a high cover of perennial vegetation with minimal maintenance, and
- design the site with pervious space between solar panel rows to promote infiltration of stormwater runoff. Use structural stormwater management facilities, such as infiltration basins, only to augment stormwater runoff control.
  Solar farms can be designed to minimize the impact on landscape ecohydrological processes. Current stormwater management practices recommend low impact development practices of disconnection of solar panel impervious surfaces, well-developed shade-tolerant vegetation, and minimal impact of construction practices on soil properties.
  However, there is no mention of using LID methods for stormwater water management in the Concept Plan. Instead, stormwater basins are shown along the edges of graded areas. At a minimum, the site should be evaluated for suitability of using LID for stormwater management or a hybrid combination of LID and conventional stormwater management practices.
  The Albemarle County CAP and Comprehensive plan encourage and support groundwater recharge as a site development stormwater practice. Using LID, as part of the stormwater management plan, would provide a means to recharge groundwater from site development.

2. Select site management practices that minimize adverse impacts (soil compaction) and maximize additional benefits, such as leveraging sheep grazing for vegetation management in lieu of frequent mowing.
3. The construction sequence plan on sheet C8.0 shows 7 areas that are within the limits of disturbance. Area 1 is shown as 267 acres that will be cleared and graded. The grading plan on sheet C9.1 and layout plan on sheet C3.1 show relatively steep slopes in Area 1. Due to the steeper slopes and soils with moderate to high erodibility, there is a high probability that sediment will be difficult to capture onsite. It is strongly recommended that site grading is limited to smaller drainage areas.
4. Vegetation must be established before another area is cleared and graded. Ensure the construction sequencing allows time for established vegetation and avoid sequencing the project in a manner that causes compaction of soils by heavy equipment.

   In the photos below, you can see channels eroding between panel array rows. The panels are impervious surfaces that increaser stormwater runoff. A solution to avoid channel erosion and to provide groundwater recharge would be to use infiltration swales or engineered swales BMPs between the panel rows. The use of LID methods for stormwater management should be considered.

Thank you for serving Albemarle County.

Sincerely,

Kirk A Bowers, PE

December 8, 2022

Dear Planning Commission,

We are writing in support of the Special Use Permits for the Woodridge Solar Project. Our research has found this project to be consistent with the county's environmental and land use goals, and we hope it will be approved and constructed.

Livable Cville's mission is to advocate for policies to build an inclusive Charlottesville area with affordable housing, sustainable transportation, and healthy neighborhoods welcoming to all. Climate change and environmental justice are urgent matters, and we must address them at the local level.

The Woodridge Solar Project is an opportunity for Albemarle County to establish itself as a leader in Virginia for how to do utility scale solar projects well. It is a chance to say "yes" to renewable energy locally while preserving the ecological integrity of the site through a vegetation management plan that will remediate the land and grow hundreds of acres of native plants.

The project is consistent with Phase One of Albemarle County's Climate Action Plan. The CAP recommends that when considering utility-scale renewable energy projects, the county should "strive to maintain a holistic perspective that accounts for potential climate benefits and the health of our local ecosystem." This project maintains that balance through a combination of reduction in carbon emissions, room for effective stormwater management, and an extensive vegetation management plan that qualifies for the Virginia Pollinator Smart program.

Another chance to make this much progress on the county's environmental goals through renewable energy is unlikely to come along anytime soon. Hexagon Energy secured a connectivity agreement with PJM for this project – and just in time, since the regional transmission operator recently announced a two-year pause on new power developments seeking connection to its grid. Rejection of Woodridge Solar could cause the county to miss this window of opportunity and give solar developers pause about pursuing local utility-scale projects longer term. It could take decades for smaller community-scale and rooftop projects to provide an equivalent amount of renewable energy in Albemarle County.

We understand that this project is complicated, represents a significant change for land use on this site, and is unlike anything ever done before in Albemarle County. We also see it as a win-win situation – giving Albemarle County the chance to both improve local ecological diversity and act quickly on its ambitious goals to address climate change.

We hope you recommend approval for this project.

Thank you for your consideration.

Livable Cville

Piedmont Environmental Council

Protecting and promoting the natural resources, rural economy, history and beauty of the Virginia Piedmont since 1972

VIA EMAIL ONLY | PlanningCommission@albemarle.org

December 12, 2022

Ms. Karen Firehock, Chair
Albemarle County Planning Commission
401 McIntire Road
Charlottesville, Virginia 22902

Re: Woodridge Solar SP202200014, SP202200015, and SE202200035

Dear Chair Firehock and Planning Commission members,

The Piedmont Environmental Council (PEC) respectfully submits the following comments regarding Woodridge Solar SP202200014, SP202200015, and SE202200035.

PEC supports solar energy. For decades now, we have been committed advocates for rooftop and ground-mount systems. In addition, we have spoken in support of carefully sited utility-scale solar proposals, like the Dominion facility located in Remington, Virginia, and the proposed solar facility on the Rivanna Solid Waste Authority's former landfill at the Ivy Material Utilization Center.

We recognize that utility-scale solar facilities will play a critical role in the Commonwealth's transition to clean energy. Appropriately siting, designing, constructing, maintaining, and decommissioning these facilities is key to adequately addressing potential adverse environmental impacts.

Given the proposed mass grading of the entire 650-acre area of solar arrays and associated development, including the extensive depth of cutting and filling of soil, this project is precedent-setting. The County has the opportunity to set a higher standard for utility-scale solar facilities in the County's Rural Areas.

Summary of PEC's recommendations concerning the Special Use Permit Conditions:

Mitigation of Adverse Impacts | Mass Grading of the Entire Project Area

- Owing to the mass grading of the project site, the owner should be required by the County to mitigate the adverse impacts through annual payments from the solar facility owner to the County, in addition to the annual taxes paid or revenue sharing provided by the owner.

Erosion and Sediment Control, Grading, and Stormwater Management

- Although the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality does not require this standard to be met by applicants who obtain an interconnection approval by a regional transmission organization or electric utility by December 31, 2024, PEC recommend the County require this more stringent standard in the stormwater management design for this project, to protect the local water quality and prevent excessive stormwater runoff.
- PEC recommends that the owner pay for an independent third party to review all stormwater management plans and erosion and sediment control plans in addition to the County's review process.
- During construction, the owner should pay for the services of an independent qualified third-party inspector, to undertake inspection of the erosion and sediment control measures.

Virginia Pollinator-Smart Solar Program

- PEC recommends that the applicant should be required to establish pollinator plants for all disturbed areas of the project area that are not roads or facilities, including all planted buffer areas and all areas of solar panels.

Vegetation Management Plan and Plants Species

- PEC recommends that all buffer plantings and pollinator plantings be inspected on an annual basis by an independent third-party inspector qualified to assess the health of the existing forested areas that serve as visual buffer, planted visual buffers, stream buffer vegetation, and pollinator plantings.

Decommissioning

- The removal of the entirety of all above-ground and below-ground equipment, structures, and other improvements is needed so the site may have a greater likelihood of returning to another use at the end of the facility's operation.

Mitigation of Adverse Impacts | Mass Grading of the Entire Project Area

A consistent theme in the applicant's proposal has been to emphasize the site's long-standing past use as a timbering operation and to downplay the many benefits that commercial timberland provides to the locality such as soil stabilization, carbon sequestration, air filtration, run-off interception, and wildlife habitat which will not be recreated by the solar facility installation. The consistent theme has been that the proposed solar facility represents a use that allows the soils on the site to heal and rest, and ultimately be able to return to agricultural land or working forested land after the life of the project. Respectfully, that claim is not well-supported. The proposed mass grading, disruption of soils, and likely compaction of soils with heavy equipment are counterproductive to efforts aimed at resting or healing land. Dr. Lee Daniels, a soils scientist at Virginia Tech researching impacts of utility-scale solar facilities on soils, has found that soils will not be the same after construction and removal of utility-scale projects: tillage is required to loosen compacted soils, topsoil is very difficult to

reintroduce, and most sites will require soil amendments.[i] The applicant's decommissioning plan do not offer any guarantee of site restoration at the end of the project's life.

The County staff report indicates, based on the applicant's submitted decommissioning plan, the project site will be returned to 2022 conditions. The applicant has provided conceptual grading plans, including soil cutting and filling diagrams, which indicate the cutting of existing highpoints and ridges by up to 12 feet of depth and the filling of drainageways to a depth of up to 16 feet. The proposed grading concept indicates large-scale mass grading of the entire project area that is typically encountered in large-scale land development projects. The proposed mass grading work will require extensive use of heavy earthmoving equipment and compacted layers of fill. The results of this approach will be loss of existing natural landforms, creation of new landforms, and the degrading of the soils—much of which is classified as prime agricultural soils—by being transported within the site and co-mingled with other soils, and compaction. The decommissioned site will likely not support (or be well-suited for) agricultural or forestal uses.

Given the substantial adverse impacts of the project—likely permanent loss of prime agricultural soils and the distinct possibility of permanent loss of timberland—the owner should be required by the County to mitigate the adverse impacts through annual payments from the solar facility owner to the County, in addition to the annual taxes paid or revenue sharing provided by the owner. The County attorney should provide direction regarding the best mechanism for securing mitigation payments, such as a siting agreement[ii], special use permit condition, or other mechanism. Mitigation payments should be directed by the County towards the County's land conservation programs, which directly protect the rural land uses (agriculture and forestry) that will likely be forever lost by construction of this project.

The following are PEC's additional recommendations regarding Special Use Permit Conditions.

Erosion and Sediment Control, Grading, and Stormwater Management

The project area involves a number of small streams which feed into Turkey Run and ultimately the James River. Stream health is at severe risk during large land development projects like this one if strong, enforceable conditions are not made a part of the Special Use Permit. The concept plans and associated cut and fill mapping show a complete mass grading of all areas within the proposed fenced perimeter.

All stormwater management design should meet the guidance established by the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality for utility-scale solar facilities:

> "To date, Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) has not required solar projects that are subject to Virginia Stormwater Management

> Program (VSMP) requirements to account for the imperviousness of the solar panels when applying the Commonwealth's post-development stormwater management technical criteria. When performing water quantity (rainfall-runoff) calculations, DEQ's practice has been to consider only the solar panel support posts and beams as impervious areas. However, this approach has the potential to underestimate the post development runoff volume or runoff rate from solar panel arrays, which in turn has the potential to negatively impact downstream waterways or properties. Additionally, the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Chesapeake Bay Program considers the solar panels to be impervious areas for the purposes of performing water quality modeling/calculations for the Chesapeake Bay Total Maximum Daily Load."
>
> - DEQ, Memorandum dated March 29, 2022

Although DEQ does not require this standard to be met by applicants who obtain an interconnection approval by a regional transmission organization or electric utility by December 31, 2024, PEC recommends the County require this more stringent standard in the stormwater management design for this project, to protect the local water quality and prevent excessive stormwater runoff.

PEC also recommends that an independent third party review all stormwater management plans and erosion and sediment control plans in addition to the County's review process. To better ensure the proper design of stormwater management plans and erosion and sediment control plans, the owner should be required to pay for the independent review of these plans by qualified licensed design professionals. Third-party reviewers should be required to submit review comments to the owner and the County.

Additionally, **during construction, the owner should pay for the services of an independent qualified third-party erosion and sediment control inspector, to undertake inspection of the erosion and sediment control measures.** The inspector should be required to prepare construction field reports documenting the work. These reports should be submitted to the owner, the construction contractor, and the County.

Virginia Pollinator-Smart Solar Program

The applicant has submitted a Vegetation Management Plan. This plan includes a discussion of the Virginia Pollinator-Smart Solar program. PEC concurs with the staff recommendation that a condition should be included requiring the project to meet the requirements of the Virginia Pollinator-Smart Solar program. However, **PEC also recommends that the applicant should be required to establish pollinator plants for <u>all disturbed areas</u> of the project area that are not roads or facilities, including all planted buffer areas and all areas of solar panels.**

Vegetation Management Plan and Plants Species

The staff report indicates that "[t]he Vegetation Management Plan sets standards for site preparation, planting, plant establishment, and long-term maintenance. To ensure that vegetation management on the site continues to effectively provide visual screening, environmental benefits, and soil improvements, staff recommends a condition requiring that soil and vegetation management remain in accord with this Vegetation Management Plan for the life of the project." PEC concurs with this recommended condition. **PEC also recommends that all buffer plantings and pollinator plantings be inspected on an annual basis by an independent third-party inspector qualified to assess the health of the existing forested areas that serve as visual buffers, the planted visual buffers, stream buffer vegetation, and pollinator plantings.** The inspector should be required to submit a report documenting inspection findings to the owner and the County. The owner should be required to replant all failed tree, shrub, and pollinator plantings in accordance with the approved site plan or new plantings approved by the County. PEC recommends that all project plantings include only locally or regionally native plants.

The County should include a condition requiring new visual buffer plantings (meeting the design for planted buffers included in the application) where there is loss (due to storms, mortality, disease, climate change, wildfire, etc.) of existing forested areas that were retained to serve as visual buffers.

The County should require, through a condition, that the width of all planted buffers along public roads should be from the right-of-way or centerline of the roadway. In some cases, the current proposed buffer widths are based on property lines on the opposite side of the roadway, thus reducing the buffer width in those locations.

Decommissioning

A procedure to outline the removal of solar equipment and restore the site at the end of the facility's life is critically important. While we are encouraged to see the application narrative include a decommissioning plan, we respectfully note the plan specifies only removing equipment extending three feet below the ground surface. **The removal of the entirety of all above-ground and below-ground equipment, structures, and other improvements is needed so the site may have a greater likelihood of returning to another use at the end of the facility's operation.**

We discourage the County from allowing the subtraction of any anticipated revenue from salvage materials from the financial surety bond, as the future value or market for solar-related salvage is virtually unknowable. The decommissioning plan, as currently written, shows the anticipated salvage value significantly exceeding the total cost of removal.

Thank you for taking the time to review PEC's concerns and recommendations regarding this project. Please feel free to contact me with any questions or requests for additional information.

Sincerely,

Rob McGinnis PLA FASLA
Senior Land Use Field Representative | Albemarle County
rmcginnis@pecva.org
Mobile: 434.962.9110

cc: Board of Supervisors | BOS@albemarle.org

[i] Virginia Cooperative Extension, CE InService Webinar: Utility Scale Solar PV in Virginia, 4th Webinar, recorded October 14, 2020 https://sites.google.com/vt.edu/vceinservice121919solarfarms/home?pli=1

[ii] Localities in Virginia are beginning to negotiate solar siting agreements for facilities over 5 megawatts pursuant to *Code of Virginia* § 15.2-2316.6 et seq. A solar siting agreement can provide important benefits and also protections to the host locality by including terms and conditions that address mitigation of development impacts; through dedication of real property, substantial cash payments, and application of other conditions reasonably related to the project. A solar siting agreement would also be in addition to either the energy revenue share option for solar energy projects, established in state code as HB1131/ SB762 or the Machine & Tool (M&T) tax.

From: scott smith <bookrabbit@hotmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, December 13, 2022 9:51 AM
To: Planning Commission <PlanningCommission@albemarle.org>
Subject: Woodridge Solar

Dear Board of Supervisors, Planning Commission, and Staff,

My name is Scott Smith, and I've lived on Secretarys Road since January 1999. This is our first home. We've worked hard to make our own and expect to live here for many years to come. I've been active in the neighborhood in opposing Patricia Kluge's proposed Vinyard Estates development many years ago, but have been too busy owning and running Bodo's to have been involved in or aware of anything similar since, but I am writing now to voice my strong support for the Woodridge Solar project proposed in our county, and to be built just down the street from me, and I ask that you do all you can to support it as well.

I'm very aware of the County's commitment to a carbon neutral goal, and agree with the board that it is critical that we replace fossil fuels with renewable sources, like solar, absolutely as quickly as possible to combat climate change and steward our environment. Albemarle's Climate Action Plan establishes ambitious and challenging goals to address climate change. Woodridge offers an absolutely indispensable opportunity to make those goals reachable. It would take something like 30,000 new solar homes to match the impact this project is set to have.

The project's commitment to land conservation and clean energy has won a rare Sierra Club endorsement and will be an enormous improvement on the depleting effects of endless use as commercial timberland. Restoring native species also means restoring native habitat and a beneficial mix of trees to land that has been regularly denuded for a century. And the community benefit in low-cost energy is potentially just as valuable.

I live just down Secretarys from the proposed site, and I hope very much to see it approved and developed as soon as possible. Please support the project. It's a vital opportunity.

Sincerely,

Scott Smith

December 4, 2022

Albemarle County Planning Commission
401 McIntire Road
Charlottesville VA 22902

ATTN: Carolyn Shaffer, Clerk
Planning Commission

Kirk A Bowers, PE, Conservation Chair,
Piedmont Group, Virginia Chapter, Sierra Club
Charlottesville, VA
Email: engr1950@gmail.com

SUBJ: Woodridge Solar facility

Dear Planning Commission members,

The Executive Committee (EXCOM) of the Piedmont Group endorses support for the Woodridge solar facility project. The project site is suitable for a solar facility. It would generate power for 25,000 homes, over half of the homes in Albemarle County.

The project supports the goals of the Albemarle County Climate Action Plan to reduce greenhouse gases. The facility fits into the Albemarle County Comprehensive Plan goals and pending updates.

We support the Woodridge Solar project with the condition that the project undergoes a thorough site plan review by Albemarle County before approval. A comprehensive review of the erosion control plans and stormwater management plans is necessary to insure that sediment control and stormwater management meet requirements for runoff control. There are streams and wetlands that will be impacted by site development.

Conceptual plan comments will be submitted prior to the December 13th Commission meeting. There are several items shown in the Concept Plan that need to be resolved before Concept Plan approval.

Thank you for serving Albemarle County.

Sincerely,
Kirk Bowers
Kirk A Bowers, PE
On behalf of the Piedmont Group EXCOM

From: Patricia Maida <sal1948@icloud.com>
Sent: Thursday, March 2, 2023 12:05 PM
To: Bill Fritz <BFRITZ@albemarle.org>
Subject: Fwd: Commercial Solar Project

Dear Bill Fritz,

I would like to request the consultant's report on Woodridge Solar.

I was at the meeting February 28. The first item on that report was that it would destroy the wildlife in that area, which I stated in the first virtual meeting. Also my concern regarding the hunting club shooting bullets near the solar panels, which could damage the solar panels. If the solar panels were damaged they could release toxins.

This property would be an industrial site, there could never be agriculture use ever again. This will become Albemarle County's industrial waste dump area. I feel the people have been falsely told that it is an agricultural site with a special use permit. It is NOT a farm, it is an industrial site right in the middle of homes.

The poles used for the panels have zinc in them, as they corrode the zinc will go into the groundwater and into peoples wells and streams.

There have been many promises about natural vegetation around these panels. If you have planted anything around this area, you know how hard the clay soil is to penetrate to plant anything or to maintain plantings.

Drainage, the pine trees were a buffer against erosion. Will the basins be enough to stop erosion, which happened in Louisa county?

The consultant stated that special EMS and Firefighter training is needed. Who will be liable if homes and lives are lost because of this extremely large solar industry put in the middle of a rural community?

Scott Remer has already stated that on Hexagon Solar previous projects, after setting up they left, and so did all their promises. One of the planning board members said on previous approvals of projects with the county, properties were sold.

The owner of Hexagon Solar and the property of Woodridge (being good friends), found a way to make millions off the rural community of Woodridge.

At the meeting, one of the board members, brought up the possibility of hydro energy in the future, Why are we going to cover agricultural land with Chinese solar panels. The Chinese are the biggest pollutants in the world, who have no regard for their people who produce these volatile photovoltaic portions of these solar panels. We need to explore green energy produced in the United States.

Please don't turn this area to an industrial area.

Please forward this letter to the county board of supervisors.

Thank you for all considerations,
Patricia Maida

From: Patricia Maida <sal1948@icloud.com>
Sent: Friday, February 17, 2023 12:39 PM
To: Bill Fritz <BFRITZ@albemarle.org>
Cc: Bill Fritz <BFRITZ@albemarle.org>; Amberli Young <amberli@communitypowergroup.com>; Barbara Ryder <tisryder@gmail.com>; Bobby Jocz <bobby.jocz@suntribedevelopment.com>; Brad Daniel <brad_daniel@yahoo.com>; Carolyn Graves <cgraves52@comcast.net>; Charlie Armstrong <CharlesA@southern-development.com>; chris obrien <bikecob@protonmail.com>; Christine Hirsh-Putnam2 <chirshputnam@gmail.com>; Christopher Hawk <chawk@pecva.org>; CVEC (acotter@mycvec.com) <acotter@mycvec.com>; Dan Kenan <dan.kenan@gmail.com>; David Weber <davidlweber9311@gmail.com>; Debi Winstead <dewinstead724@gmail.com>; Douglas Gellman <dzg@hotmail.com>; Elizabeth Gathright <elcgathright@gmail.com>; Elizabeth K Williams <ekw777@gmail.com>; Elizabeth Napier <enapier@middlebury.edu>; Holmes C. Brown <orkney1942@gmail.com>; James Allen <jim.allen@jcallencfa.com>; James Clark <refrep402@gmail.com>; James Owen <k4cgy@yahoo.com>; Jane Fellows <dancingdeer.fellows@gmail.com>; Jared Kunkel <JKunkel@trccompanies.com>; Jian Lin <jlin@albemarle.org>; Katie Ebinger (katie@theclimatecollaborative.org) <katie@theclimatecollaborative.org>; Kevin Winstead <klw13517@gmail.com>; Kimberley Goossens <eddress@mac.com>; Kristin Jones <kejones1907@gmail.com>; Kyle West <kwest@vegarenew.com>; Lisa Martin <lisamartinbooks@gmail.com>; Liz Russell <lrussell@monticello.org>; MarianneObrien <MarianneObrien@protonmail.com>; Mario McBride <macd.mcbride@gmail.com>; Mark Tueting <mtueting@harrisonburg.k12.va.us>; Marla Muntner <mmuntner@gmail.com>; Megan Nedostup <mnedostup@williamsmullen.com>; MIke Stanton <Mike.Stanton@suntribedevelopment.com>; Nancy Gill <negill55@gmail.com>; Nancy Koenig <nekoenig@reagan.com>; Padma Ball <pball749@gmail.com>; Phil Horwitch <phorwitch@americanhelios.com>; Phyllis Johansen <pmjohansen7@gmail.com>; Rachel Boots <rachel@communitypowergroup.com>; Rich Buell <rbuell@americanhelios.com>; Richard Keffert <richard.keffert@gmail.com>; Robert McGinnis <rmcginnis@pecva.org>; Sara Tueting <tueting6@gmail.com>; Scott Clark <Sclark@albemarle.org>; Scott Remer <sremer@hexagon-energy.com>; Sharon Root <sharonrt1@gmail.com>; Steven Morelli <smorelli@co.augusta.va.us>; Sueellen Aldina <suellenrae@gmail.com>; Valerie Long <vlong@williamsmullen.com>; Wyatt Burttschell <wburttschell@pecva.org>
Subject: Re: Commercial Solar Project

I have been to the first virtual meeting, the town meeting, the planning board meeting and have had Scott Remer at my home three times to oppose this solar project.

Across from my home is the corner of Eyeland Drive and Secretarys Rd. I have watched the timbering and the correct herbicides amounts placed in order to regrow the current pines trees across from me. They are beautiful and are reflective of an agricultural and historical area in Scottsville. The property directly next to my home was improperly timbered and OVER OVER sprayed with herbicides. This created devastation to the soil, drainage and the creeks behind this area, perfect for Scott Remer's video shown on television and the virtual meeting.

I had learned from the Hexagon Energy owner (planning board meeting) that apparently both he and the owner of the timber company were good friends and that they decided a solar farm would be very profitable for both companies. This leads me to believe the over destruction of the property next to me was done intentionally.

Originally, the lease for the hunters was revoked, but with their support for the solar farm it would be reinstated. At the town meeting, one of the hunters stated that if the solar farm didn't get approved there could be multiple family homes placed there. That same scenario was presented to me by Scott Remer at my home. When questioning Scott Remer and Bill Fritz regarding this issue both stated the regulations would have acreage amounts that would not allow multi homes placed together.

Another neighbor or and his granddaughter spoke in favor of the solar farm. Even though they personally don't live in this area, they own property at the end of Eyeland Drive and Scott Remer promised maintenance and upkeep of Eyeland Drive.

Of course every solar company spoke in favor of this solar farm, I wonder why? These solar panels come from China. Can we trust Chinese products? At the planning board meeting Scott Remer stated that these solar panels and inverters create arcs that CAN create fires, but NO safeguards have been put in place.

The promise of wild flowers, sheep, and bee hives are not realistic. If you lived in this area you know the drought like conditions in the summer, not to mention the heat alone from all these solar panels. The pine trees hold refuge and protection for the animals, prevent runoff to our streams flowing into the James River, and natural beauty. Solar panels will eliminate all the birds in the area deer, and natural vegetation.

Most importantly, there is NO PLAN in place for decommissioning these solar panels. The insurance for these solar panels is for 15 years. What happens after that? The true life expectancy of solar panels is 20 years NOT 35 years. As stated at the planning board meeting by Scott Remer, the electricity produced will go directly to northern Virginia, NOT Albemarle county, forget Scottsville.

None of the people involved with Woodridge Solar live in Scottsville, even Scott Remer purchase a home in Crozet, far from has projected solar farm.

Please forward this letter to the Albermarle County Supervisors and all interested parties against this solar farm.

Respectfully,
Patricia Maida

From: Anthony Arcuri <anthony.arcuri@arcuriassociates.com>
Sent: Tuesday, February 14, 2023 11:23 AM
To: Bill Fritz <BFRITZ@albemarle.org>; Amberli Young <amberli@communitypowergroup.com>; Barbara Ryder <tisryder@gmail.com>; Bobby Jocz <bobby.jocz@suntribedevelopment.com>; Brad Daniel <brad_daniel@yahoo.com>; Carolyn Graves <cgraves52@comcast.net>; Charlie Armstrong <CharlesA@southern-development.com>; chris obrien <bikecob@protonmail.com>; Christine Hirsh-Putnam2 <chirshputnam@gmail.com>; Christopher Hawk <chawk@pecva.org>; CVEC

(acotter@mycvec.com) <acotter@mycvec.com>; Dan Kenan <dan.kenan@gmail.com>; David Weber <davidlweber9311@gmail.com>; Debi Winstead <dewinstead724@gmail.com>; Douglas Gellman <dzg@hotmail.com>; Elizabeth Gathright <elcgathright@gmail.com>; Elizabeth K Williams <ekw777@gmail.com>; Elizabeth Napier <enapier@middlebury.edu>; Holmes C. Brown <orkney1942@gmail.com>; James Allen <jim.allen@jcallencfa.com>; James Clark <refrep402@gmail.com>; James Owen <k4cgy@yahoo.com>; Jane Fellows <dancingdeer.fellows@gmail.com>; Jared Kunkel <JKunkel@trccompanies.com>; Jian Lin <jlin@albemarle.org>; Katie Ebinger (katie@theclimatecollaborative.org) <katie@theclimatecollaborative.org>; Kevin Winstead <klw13517@gmail.com>; Kimberley Goossens <eddress@mac.com>; Kristin Jones <kejones1907@gmail.com>; Kyle West <kwest@vegarenew.com>; Lisa Martin <lisamartinbooks@gmail.com>; Liz Russell <lrussell@monticello.org>; MarianneObrien <MarianneObrien@protonmail.com>; Mario McBride <macd.mcbride@gmail.com>; Mark Tueting <mtueting@harrisonburg.k12.va.us>; Marla Muntner <mmuntner@gmail.com>; Megan Nedostup <mnedostup@williamsmullen.com>; MIke Stanton <Mike.Stanton@suntribedevelopment.com>; Nancy Gill <negill55@gmail.com>; Nancy Koenig <nekoenig@reagan.com>; Padma Ball <pball749@gmail.com>; Patricia Maida <sal1948@icloud.com>; Phil Horwitch <phorwitch@americanhelios.com>; Phyllis Johansen <pmjohansen7@gmail.com>; Rachel Boots <rachel@communitypowergroup.com>; Rich Buell <rbuell@americanhelios.com>; Richard Keffert <richard.keffert@gmail.com>; Robert McGinnis <rmcginnis@pecva.org>; Sara Tueting <tueting6@gmail.com>; Scott Clark <Sclark@albemarle.org>; Scott Remer <sremer@hexagon-energy.com>; Sharon Root <sharonrt1@gmail.com>; Steven Morelli <smorelli@co.augusta.va.us>; Sueellen Aldina <suellenrae@gmail.com>; Valerie Long <vlong@williamsmullen.com>; Wyatt Burttschell <wburttschell@pecva.org>
Cc: Anthony Arcuri <anthony.arcuri@arcuriassociates.com>
Subject: RE: Commercial Solar Project

Bill,

Quite frankly, I believe many of us want to know the status of the project.

It is a GO or NOGO.

For those of us opposed to it, who do we direct our complaints to in order to stop it.

It is a project that does not benefit us in that area of the county or anyone in Albemarle County. The lack of benefit information was shared directly with us during the first virtual meeting. The power goes to the grid and helps Dominion who has let all customers down in southern Albemarle for years through unreliable power that goes out regardless of the weather.
Until recently due to many, many complaints with Dominion and with the state regulatory agency we have had fewer power outages. I have voiced countless complaints with them over the last 8 years.

The proposed project will be unsightly (I have seen many of these in New York state, out west and in Europe as well as in Palmyra, VA) will destroy the natural vegetation, increase run off, do away with natural vegetation for animals,**decrease land values** in the surrounding area, NOT benefit any of us living there, is a project with no firm answer on how the materials will be disposed of (this is the biggest issue with supposed green technology that no one can answer with concrete evidence and solutions) and is discriminatory as it is being placed in an area of the county where many people are unable to connect with what is going on due to lack of internet and or inability to pay for it, is more rural than the

rest of the county and has historically been left behind when compared to other parts of the county and or Charlottesville.

Tucking this unsightly project away in southern Albemarle County may be a great solution for the county to carry on with the Climate Protection Action Plan but it does nothing to help our community. I see on the county website Climate Protection Resources/Environmental Stewardship https://www.albemarle.org/community/environmental-stewardship-in-albemarle-county/what-you-can-do-on-your-land that is suggests planting forests and or retaining forests but I do not see anything about destroying forest land for solar farms. Interesting.

The only thing green about green energy are the paychecks, grants and funds that people, businesses and municipalities receive from tax payers.

Again, I believe that many of us want a status check on this project. Is it a GO or a NOGO at this point in time? If it is a GO who do we directly complain to that decisions are being made by and affecting us.

Thank you.

ARCURI ASSOCIATES
WEALTH MANAGEMENT, LLC

Anthony J Arcuri

Financial Advisor

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Charlottesville, VA 22911

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anthony.arcuri@arcuriassociates.com