

George Latimer
County Executive

June 14, 2021

Carolyn Saracino, Planning Board Secretary
Town of Mount Pleasant Planning Board
One Town Hall Plaza
Valhalla, NY 10595

**County Planning Board Referral File MTP 21-004 – CES Hawthorne Solar LLC, Gate of
Heaven Cemetery
Site Plan and Special Use Permit**

Dear Ms. Saracino:

The Westchester County Planning Board has received a site plan (dated revised February 26, 2021) and related materials for a proposed 5.6 MW solar farm and battery storage system to be located on a 28-acre portion of the Gate of Heaven Cemetery at the north end of the cemetery property. This site is currently wooded and abuts the Sprain Brook Parkway and the Taconic State Parkway, south of where they merge. The site also contains frontage along Bradhurst Avenue (NYS Route 100) where vehicular access to the site would be provided via a new driveway connection.

We have reviewed the site plan under the provisions of Section 239 L, M and N of the General Municipal Law and Section 277.61 of the County Administrative Code and we offer the following comments:

1. Tree removal and screening.

The subject site and the surrounding area have a wooded character, which could be compromised by the proposed solar farm. The site plans do not show a count of the trees to be removed or a detailed analysis of how the solar farm would be visually buffered from surrounding roads and properties. The applicant should also demonstrate how the proposed solar farm will not compromise the scenic character or viewsheds of the Taconic State Parkway and the Sprain Brook Parkway.

In the past year, we have received several solar farm applications proposed throughout the county due to the recent adoption of solar regulations in a number of municipalities. We point out that tree removal counts and visual buffer requirements have been required in many applications, and we believe this information to be critical in assessing a proposed solar farm's environmental impact under SEQR. While we are generally supportive of adding more solar power to our region's energy grid, it should not be done at great expense to other environmental factors, such as the carbon-negative impact of deforestation. We point out that some jurisdictions – including Westchester County government – require new tree plantings to offset the loss of trees due to construction. We encourage the Town to consider deforestation impacts as solar farm development applications continue to be considered.

2. NYS DOT review.

The Sprain Brook Parkway, the Taconic State Parkway and Bradhurst Avenue (NYS Route 100) are State highways. The Town should forward a copy of the application to NYS DOT to identify any required permits for the proposed project. The applicant should also work with NYS DOT to ensure the proposed solar farm will not compromise the scenic character or viewsheds of the Taconic State Parkway and the Sprain Brook Parkway.

Please inform us of the Town's decision so that we can make it a part of the record.

Thank you for calling this matter to our attention.

Respectfully,
WESTCHESTER COUNTY PLANNING BOARD

By: 

Norma V. Drummond
Commissioner

NVD/MV

cc: Lance MacMillan, Regional Director, NYS DOT Region 8
Anne Darelus, NYS DOT Region 8