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To: [PUC - Clerk](#)
Subject: 21-3587-NMP
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To Whom it May Concern,

It has recently come to my attention that a beautiful forest in Norwich containing significant natural and cultural resources is about to be destroyed to make room for a commercial solar development. No one in our neighborhood has been alerted to the fact of this project. None of us has been consulted about it. Without our knowledge or consent, project 21-3587-NMP is going to adversely affect the quality of life for dozens of families, and will permanently destroy an irreplaceable natural environment that provides us, all of Norwich, and indeed the entire region with numerous valuable ecological benefits.

The mature mixed hardwood forest 21-3587-NMP is scheduled to replace contains distinct natural communities and ecologically important wetlands, including streams and notably, vernal pools, which are vital breeding spaces for amphibians. And due to the steep, sloping nature of the site, there may well be seeps that create microenvironments critical for certain species of plants and amphibians. Elsewhere in the forest there also may be rare, threatened, or endangered plant species. We should find out before it's too late.

This forest in the heart of Norwich is an important connector, a vital link in a larger forested landscape that is heavily used by both wildlife and people. Meandering through this unbroken forest, and the larger forest of which it is a part, are trails that the community uses year 'round for hiking, cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, bird watching, school projects, citizen-science, stress-relief, meditation, and for healthy exercise generally as it is within walking distance of perhaps the most densely populated portion of Norwich. The forest is also an important deer habitat, and is heavily used by hunters in the fall.

At the landscape level, this forest is of regional and even global importance. Vermont links broad swaths of interconnected forested landscapes that serve as a corridor allowing wildlife to move freely East to West from New York, through Vermont and New Hampshire, and then on to Maine and the Canadian maritime provinces. Another critical wildlife corridor runs North to South from Massachusetts, through Vermont, and up into Quebec.

This entire region -- of which our local Norwich forest is a small but important part -- is the most intact temperate broadleaf forest in the world, and that makes it globally significant. This large regional network of healthy forests, wetlands, rivers, lakes, and streams supports a bountiful diversity of wildlife, including the richest assortment of birds in the United States, as well as key indicator species such as bobcats, black bears, and moose. These animals have territories spanning many square miles, and they need expansive forests to roam widely and maintain healthy breeding populations.

The rapidly changing climate is displacing wildlife everywhere, forcing them to relocate, and they require connected forests to do so. Forest fragmentation by roads, housing, commercial development, and energy sprawl is a serious threat to wildlife and ecosystem integrity, and must be stopped if we are to have a healthy functioning environment for all of us, wildlife included, to live in.

In New England, if trends continue, 1.2 million acres of forestland will be irretrievably lost to development in the next 50 years, and projects like this contribute to that irrevocable loss. Loss of forestland will permanently damage the cherished character of the New England landscape. It will diminish its beauty, undermine its capacity to yield clean water, to mitigate flooding -- which is expected to increase dramatically in Vermont due to climate change -- to produce food and wood products, to support wildlife, and to provide other critical services needed and valued by New Englanders.

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