

**STATE OF VERMONT
PUBLIC UTILITY COMMISSION**

Petition of Savage Solar Energy LLC for a	)	
Certificate of Public Good, pursuant to 30	)	
V.S.A. § 248, authorizing the installation	)	
and operation of a 2.75 MW solar electric	)	Case No. 26-____-PET
generation facility off Route 103 in Chester,	)	
Vermont to be known as the “Savage Solar	)	
Energy Project”	)	

PREFILED DIRECT TESTIMONY OF JEREMY B. OWENS

March 23, 2026

Summary: Mr. Owens’ testimony addresses the proposed Savage Solar Energy Project’s compliance with Section 248 (b)(1) and (b)(5) pertaining to the orderly development of the region and aesthetics.

Exhibits:

SSE-JO-1: Resume

SSE-JO-2: Aesthetic Assessment and Orderly Development
Report

Appendix A: Maps

Appendix B: Photographic Inventory

Appendix C: Landscape Mitigation Plan

Appendix D: Regional and Town Plan Excerpts

1 **Q1. Please state your name, occupation, and business address.**

2 A1. My name is Jeremy B. Owens. I am a licensed Senior Landscape Architect with T.J. Boyle
3 Associates Landscape Architecture and Planning located at 301 College Street in Burlington,
4 Vermont.

5
6 **Q2. Please describe your background and qualifications.**

7 A2. I received my bachelor's degree in Landscape Architecture from the University of Georgia
8 College of Environment and Design in 2003. I have experience with a wide variety of landscape
9 planning and design services, including site layout, grading, planting plans, lighting design,
10 residential design, commercial and public sector design, and aesthetic impact analyses. My
11 resume is attached as *Exhibit SSE-JO-1*.

12
13 **Q3. What is the purpose of your testimony?**

14 A3. The purpose of my testimony is to describe the work that I have conducted regarding the
15 proposed Savage Solar Energy Project (the "Project"), introduce the Aesthetic Assessment and
16 Orderly Development Report that I prepared regarding the Project (submitted as *Exhibit SSE-*
17 *JO-2*), and provide my opinion regarding the Project's compliance with the requirements of
18 Section 248 with regard to aesthetics (§ 248(b)(5)) and orderly development of the region
19 (§ 248(b)(1)).

1 **Q4. Have you previously testified before the Public Utility Commission?**

2 A4. Yes. I have testified before the Commission on many Projects, including recent cases such as
3 Hunt Road Solar, Case No. 23-2420-PET; Barnet Solar, Case No. 23-3381-PET; Furnace Brook
4 Solar, Case No. 23-4028-PET, Post Road Solar, Case No. 23-4324-PET; Little Brook Solar,
5 Case No. 23-4324-PET; and Stone House Solar, Case No. 25-1827-PET. Other cases include
6 Case No. 22-4900-PET on behalf of New England Power Company, Midway Ave Solar LLC in
7 Docket No. 22-4376-PET, on behalf of Steinberg Road Solar LLC in Docket No. 22-3941-PET,
8 on behalf of Bullfrog Hollow Solar, LLC in Docket No. 22-2073-PET, on behalf of Lowery
9 Road Solar in Case No. 23-1994-PET, among others.

11 **Q5. Please describe the work you have done for this Project.**

12 A5. To evaluate potential aesthetic impacts due to the proposed 2.75 megawatt (MW) solar electric
13 generation project, I performed visual and viewshed analyses, conducted a desktop review,
14 directed a field study, and undertook document research and review. This work is described in
15 more detail in the aesthetics assessment and orderly development report. *Exhibit SSE-JO-2.*

17 **Q6. What other information is in your aesthetics report?**

18 A6. The aesthetics assessment report includes maps that identify the potential viewshed of the Project
19 from the surrounding area, a photographic inventory of views from the field investigation of
20 potential visibility, and an analysis of the Project's potential impacts with respect to aesthetics
21 using the so-called Quechee Analysis. *Exhibit SSE-JO-2.*

1 **Q7. Please briefly describe the Project site and the surrounding area.**

2 A7. The proposed site for the Savage Solar Energy Project is on a parcel of land located in the town
3 of Chester, Vermont, most of which is currently a corn field. The Project is located
4 approximately 162' east of Vermont Route 103. The fenced Project area will occupy
5 approximately 14.18 acres of the greater approximately 26-acre parcel. The Green Mountain
6 Railroad is located immediately northeast of the Project site, and the Williams River flows
7 around the east and south side of the Project site. The properties along Vermont Route 103 to the
8 north and west of the Project site are primarily commercial. The area immediately west of the
9 Project site is forested. The Project site will be accessed from Route 103 by a proposed 12' wide
10 gravel access drive that will extend approximately 250' to the western side of the Project. *See*
11 *Exh. SSE-JO-2 at 1-5; Exh. SSE-TH-2 (Site Plan).*

12
13 **SECTION 248 CRITERIA**

14 **Aesthetics (Visual) – 30 V.S.A. § 248(b)(5)**

15 **Q8. Please describe the nature of the Project's viewshed.**

16 A8. The Project site is in a relatively low-lying location where visibility is generally limited by
17 existing mixed evergreen and deciduous vegetation and intervening landforms. Due to the low
18 profile of the Project's equipment and the screening effects of vegetation and topography,
19 visibility is generally confined to areas immediately around the site. Visibility of the Project will
20 be possible from portions of Vermont Route 103 as travelers pass the Project entrance, as well as
21 from short segments of Route 103 and Legion Drive to the northwest. Additionally, there will be
22 potential visibility from several nearby commercial properties at the southeastern extent of the

1 Chester Village, from commercial properties on the west side of Route 103 near the Project
2 entrance, and from the closest nearby residential properties. Limited visibility may also occur
3 from the Green Mountain Railroad and the Williams River due to their immediate proximity,
4 though the Project is set back from the river (top of bank) approximately 100' or more. Where
5 appropriate, landscape mitigation is proposed to help screen the Project from these locations. For
6 further details, see *Exhibit SSE-JO-2*.

7
8 **Q9. Will the Project have an “adverse effect” on aesthetics or the scenic or natural beauty of**
9 **the area, under the first prong of the Quechee Test?**

10 A9. Yes. As described in the analysis and conclusion that is included in my report, *Exhibit SSE-JO-*
11 *2*, the Project is located in a transition area at the southeastern extent of the Chester Village, with
12 various nearby uses including commercial development, low-density residential properties,
13 existing electrical distribution infrastructure along Route 103, the Green Mountain Railroad, and
14 the Williams River. The Project will be potentially visible from some nearby locations in the
15 study area, with minor to no visibility expected from most locations. While most views of the
16 proposed Project from public vantages are limited and highly filtered by existing intervening
17 vegetation, visibility will be possible from portions of Route 103 and Legion Drive, as well as
18 from nearby commercial and residential properties. The Project's colors and materials are
19 compatible with existing electrical infrastructure in the area, particularly the distribution lines
20 along Route 103, as well as various commercial buildings in the nearby landscape. However,
21 where visible, the Project will be a noticeable change to existing views. For this reason, the

1 Project represents a change to the existing conditions that I conclude is adverse to the aesthetics
2 and scenic and natural beauty of the area. *See Exhibit SSE-JO-2.*

3
4 **Q10. Will the Project have an undue adverse effect on aesthetics or the scenic or natural beauty**
5 **of the area under the second prong of the Quechee test?**

6 A10. No. A review of the Project under the second part of the Quechee test found that the Project will
7 not have an undue adverse effect on aesthetics or the scenic or natural beauty of the area. The
8 Project will not violate any clearly written community standard intended to preserve the
9 aesthetics or scenic beauty of the area. The Project incorporates reasonable siting and significant
10 landscape mitigation efforts to reduce potential visibility and harmonize the Project with its
11 surroundings. The Project will be set low in the landscape and largely screened by existing
12 vegetation and landform, and landscape mitigation consisting of a mix of evergreen and
13 deciduous plantings is proposed to augment existing vegetative screening along the northern
14 Project extent and near the proposed access drive. Finally, the Project will not offend the
15 sensibilities of the average person, in that it will not be offensive or shocking due to the lack of
16 extensive public views, similarity of the Project materials to nearby electrical infrastructure and
17 development, limited visibility of the overall Project from the majority of the surrounding area,
18 and incorporation of landscape mitigation measures that prevent the array from appearing
19 significantly out of character with its surroundings or significantly diminishing the scenic
20 qualities of the area in which it is proposed. *See Exhibit SSE-JO-2.*

Orderly Development – 30 V.S.A. § 248(b)(1)

Q11. Will the Project unduly interfere with the orderly development of the region?

A11. No, as further discussed in *Exhibit SSE-JO-2*, the Project will not unduly interfere with the orderly development of the region. The Project will not violate any specific land conservation measures or policies contained in the Mount Ascutney Regional Plan, the Regional Energy Plan, or the Chester Town Plan. The siting of the Project as proposed does not conflict with the development goals and policies within these Plans, and the Project will help meet energy goals outlined in Vermont's Comprehensive Energy Plan and the Regional and Town Plans.

Q12. Does the Chester Town Plan contain any land conservation measures or policies that are specific to the Project site or surrounding area, and if so, does the Project comply with such provisions?

A12. There are no specific land conservation measures in the Chester Town Plan that apply to or will be unduly affected by the Project, and the Project is not located in protected or otherwise described conservation areas. The Town Plan does include policies for avoiding and/or mitigating impacts to known and possible constraints. The Project avoids known constraints and is consistent with the guidance on possible constraints, including vernal pools, river corridors, floodways, natural communities, rare, threatened and endangered species, National wilderness areas, wetlands and streams. Additionally, the Project site is located in an area depicted as secondary solar resource areas (See Appendix D, Town Plan, Chester Solar Resources Map). The Project also includes proposed landscape mitigation to screen from surrounding roadways. See further discussion in *Exhibit SSE-JO-2*.

1
2 **Q13. Does the Regional Plan contain land conservation measures or specific policies regarding**
3 **the orderly development of the region that are specific to the Project site or surrounding**
4 **area, and if so, does the Project comply with such provisions?**

5 A13. The Regional Plan does not contain any specific land conservation measures that apply to or will
6 be unduly affected by the Project. The Regional Plan includes policies that solar generation
7 projects greater than 150 kW that are within view of major roadways must provide landscape
8 screening, as well as avoid known constraints and undue adverse impacts on wildlife habitat and
9 travel corridors, stormwater, water quality, flood resiliency, important recreation facilities or
10 uses, scenic resources, or inventoried historic or cultural resources. The Project is not located in
11 protected or otherwise described conservation areas or open space, or in an area with “known
12 constraints,” and the Project will avoid undue adverse impacts to significant natural communities
13 and sites. The Project also employs reasonable measures to mitigate potential impacts as
14 envisioned in the Regional Plan. Additionally, the Project site is located in an area depicted as a
15 secondary solar resource area in the Regional Plan (See Appendix D, Regional Energy Plan, Map
16 3B). *See Exhibits SSE-TH-2; SSE-JO-2; SSE-MLS-2.*

17
18 **Q14. Has the Town of Chester adopted a municipal bylaw under 24 V.S.A. § 4414(15) or a**
19 **municipal ordinance under 24 V.S.A. § 2291(28) containing screening requirements that**
20 **apply to a ground-mounted solar electric generation facility?**

21 A14. No, based upon available information we have not found any municipal bylaw or ordinance
22 adopted by the Town of Chester that contains solar screening requirements. However, as stated

1 above, both the Mount Ascutney Regional Plan and the Chester Town Plan contain language
2 regarding screening of solar generation facilities from roadways. The Project has proposed
3 substantial landscape mitigation planting comprised of a mix of largely native plants of both
4 deciduous and evergreen varieties that will reduce views of the Project from public and private
5 vantages, particularly to the northwest and north of the Project. These plantings, together with
6 the existing surrounding vegetation, will further mitigate viewshed impacts and help the Project
7 blend in with its surroundings. *See Exhibit SSE-JO-2* for more information, and Appendix C for
8 the proposed landscape mitigation plan. Furthermore, it is my understanding that these plantings
9 will be inspected in the early years of their growth and maintained for the life of the Project as
10 required by the Commission's aesthetic mitigation rule (Rule 5.800).

11
12 **Q15. Does this conclude your testimony at this time?**

13 **A15.** Yes, it does.