

STATE OF VERMONT
PUBLIC UTILITY COMMISSION

Case No. 26-0540-PET

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 generation facility in Chester, Vermont	
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VERMONT DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SERVICE
COMMENTS ON THE PETITION OF SAVAGE SOLAR ENERGY LLC
FOR A CERTIFICATE OF PUBLIC GOOD PURSUANT TO 30 V.S.A. § 248

On March 3, 2026, Savage Solar Energy LLC (Petitioner”) filed a petition with the Vermont Public Utility Commission (“Commission”) pursuant to 30 V.S.A. § 248 for approval of for a Certificate of Public Good (“CPG”) to operate a 2.75 MW solar generation installation to be located on a parcel of land off Route 103 in Chester, Vermont (“Project”). Petitioner also requested a 30 V.S.A. § 202(f) determination by the Vermont Department of Public Service (“Department”) on the Project’s conformance with the Vermont Electric Energy Plan. The Department provides the following comments in support of the Project and will separately file a § 202(f) determination.

The Project involves the installation of approximately 7,200, 590-watt solar panels on fixed tilt racking within an area surrounded by an approximately 7’ perimeter fence.¹ Petitioner entered into a Purchase Power Agreement (“PPA”) with Green Mountain Power (“GMP”) in which electricity and renewable energy certificates (“RECs”) produced by the Project would be sold to GMP.² The approximately 25.72 acre host parcel for the Project site is owned by HM Savage & Sons Inc.³ Currently, the Project site is primarily occupied by a corn field.⁴ Petitioner anticipates

¹ Prefiled Direct Testimony of Thomas Hand, 3-5.

² *Id.* at 13-14.

³ *Id.* at 2, 5-6.

⁴ *Id.* at 2-3.

that the Project would result in approximately 0.06 acres of vegetative clearing and approximately 15.08 acres of impacted Primary Agricultural Soils (“PAS”)⁵. The Project is designed to place all electrical equipment at least one foot above the base flood elevation of the area.⁶ The Project’s inverters would be surrounded by an approximately 8’ perimeter fence lined with sound attenuating blankets.⁷ Petitioner proposes a new 250’ long 12’ wide gravel access road and an approximately 0.05 acre staging area.⁸ The Project involves approximately 1,224 square feet of impact on a Class II wetland buffer.⁹

Based on its review of the Petition and prefiled testimony and exhibits, the Department concludes that the Project does not raise a significant issue with respect to the 30 V.S.A. § 248 criteria subject to the Department’s review, including orderly development, need, system stability and reliability, economic benefit, aesthetics, public health and safety, municipal services, development effecting public investments, economic service by existing or planned transmission facilities, and compliance with the Vermont Electric Energy Plan and Commission Rule 5.900.

Based on the Department’s review of the Town of Chester, Vermont Town Plan and the Mount Ascutney Regional Commission Regional Plan the Project will not interfere with the orderly development of the region.¹⁰

The Project will not interfere with municipal services or public investments.¹¹ Need for the Project is evident in that the Project would assist in achieving Town, regional, and Vermont Comprehensive Energy Plan renewable energy goals as well as GMP’s Renewable Energy

⁵ Prefiled Direct Testimony of Michael Lew-Smith, 7; Prefiled Direct Testimony of Seth Goddard, 10-11.

⁶ Hand pf. 3-4.

⁷ *Id.* at 4.

⁸ Exhibit SSE-TH-2, C-103.

⁹ *Id.* at 3; Exhibit SSE-MLS-2, 3.

¹⁰ Exhibit SSE-JO-2, 14-18.

¹¹ Hand pf. at 20.

Standard requirements.¹² The Project will not adversely affect system stability and reliability and can be served by planned or existing transmission facilities.¹³ Aside from upgrades to existing distribution lines which GMP “plans to upgrade... to address system reliability... as part of [the] Zero Outage Initiative...”, Petitioner will pay for distribution upgrades needed to interconnect the Project with GMP.¹⁴ The Project will provide economic benefits in supporting local jobs during construction, increasing tax revenues, paying for distribution system upgrades, and providing competitively priced renewable energy to GMP customers.

While the Project will have an adverse impact on the aesthetics of the area, the impact will not be undue. The Project does not violate a clear written community standard intended to protect the scenic beauty of the Project site. Petitioner proposes reasonable aesthetic mitigation measures in siting the Project in a low lying area with existing screening and proposing screening provided by an approximately 7’ wooden post perimeter fence and additional vegetative screening to be planted along the northwestern Project boundary.¹⁵ Being fairly well screened and sited near existing commercial and industrial features, including a nearby car wash and storage facility as well as existing utility distribution equipment, the Project will not be so out of place with its surroundings as to be shocking or offensive to the average person.¹⁶

The Project will not negatively impact public health or safety.¹⁷ The fenced Project will conform to the National Electric Code and National Electric Safety Code.¹⁸ The Petitioner and the

¹² Hand pf. at 13-14, 17.

¹³ *Id.* pf. at 14, 28; *See* Exhibit SSE-TH-5 Feasibility Study, 11-12.

¹⁴ Hand pf. at 15-16, 28.

¹⁵ Exhibit SSE-JO-2 at 1, Appendix C.

¹⁶ Exhibit SSE-JO-2 at 13-14; *See generally* Exhibit SSE-JO-2, Appendix A, 1, and Appendix B.

¹⁷ Hand pf. at A31.

¹⁸ *Id.* at A30.

Project will comply with Dig Safe for the life of the Project.¹⁹ The Department requests that Petitioner provide supplemental filings identifying which inverters will be used for the Project, once determined.

Based on Petitioner's Decommissioning Plan, the Department is satisfied that the Petition meets the Commission's decommissioning requirements pursuant to Rule 5.900.

At the time of this filing, no public comments were filed on the Petition. A public comment was filed in the advanced notice for the Petition (Case No. 26-1365-AN) raising the issue of siting the Project within an area identified by FEMA's National Flood Hazard map as being within a Special Flood Hazard Area. On this issue, the Department defers to the Agency of Natural Resources Watershed Management Division within the Department of Environmental Conservation, which Petitioner asserts issued a Flood Hazard Area & River Corridor ("FHARC") permit for the Project.²⁰

The Department is aware of Petitioner's testimony describing Petitioner's engagement with the Town of Chester ("Town") related to the Project's location in a Special Flood Hazard Area, primary agricultural soil impact mitigation, and Petitioner's estimate of municipal tax revenue the Project would yield.²¹ The Department also notes Petitioner's engagement with the Mount Ascutney Regional Planning Commission during the advance notice phase of this Petition relating to the site's location in a flood zone and visual screening of the Project.²²

The Department is also aware of a memorandum of understanding ("MOU") entered into by Petitioner and the Vermont Division for Historic Preservation ("VDHP"), which states, "it is

¹⁹ *Id.* at A7.

²⁰ Hand pf. at 11.

²¹ *Id.* at 11-12.

²² *Id.* at 10-11.

VDHP's opinion that the Project will cause no adverse effects to above-ground historic resources.²³ The MOU requires Petitioner to conduct archeological investigation(s) and other measures to mitigate the Project's archeological impacts. The Department also notes Petitioner's July 24, 2026 stipulation with the Agency of Agriculture Food and Markets ("AAFM"), relating to PAS disturbance, handling, and restoration, and the July 24, 2024, and Petitioner's memorandum of understanding with Agency of Natural Resources ("ANR"), storm water, wetlands, riparian buffers, and site restoration.²⁴

Based on the foregoing, the Department respectfully recommends that the Commission issue the requested CPG consistent with Petitioner's filings, subject to conditions agreed to by other State entities, without further hearings or investigation.

Dated at Montpelier, Vermont this 24th Day of July 2026.

VERMONT DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SERVICE

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²³ Exhibit SSE-VDHP-1.

²⁴ Hand pf. at 10-11; Exhibit SSE-AAFM-1; Exhibit SSE-ANR-1.