

Dear All:

January 13, 2023

On December 20, 2022, I attended the St. Johnsbury Planning Commission meeting to be educated about the application process of Norwich Solar pertaining to the Mayhew Solar Project. To my surprise, I was informed that the planning commission voted on September 20, 2022, based on a request by Martha Staskus of Norwich Solar, to give "preferred site status" to the project with a 3-1 vote. I was completely shocked. As a party that was qualified for "advance notice and information," I expected to be kept informed of the status of the application. It is obvious that the intention was to keep us (my wife and I) out of the loop. St. Johnsbury, according to the town manager, did their due diligence by posting the September agenda in three different locations and on the town's website. I learned on December 23, 2022 that "there was some email correspondence from Martha that included Susan (Ferguson)." Susan is the landowner leasing or selling the parcel for the solar project. Please note that we were NOT included on this request by Ms. Staskus to be on the agenda. According to the minutes, advocates for the project were "en masse" at the meeting.

This area has been farmed for more than two centuries. A good friend of mine, who observed his 81<sup>st</sup> birthday this month, told me his family harvested the hay in that field when he was a boy. I talked to the farmer who currently plants corn on the property and he would like to continue using the field. It seems to me, that the advocates of solar power do not have any interest in agricultural fields except to install solar panels.

I am amazed at the amount of land that will not be utilized if this project is approved. A 43+ acre parcel for a proposed solar farm array of 2.4 acres.

We have already observed the decline of wildlife in the area due to the two solar farms that are on the west side of the proposed Mayhew project. During the past two autumn seasons, we have noticed a massive reduction of the presence of wildlife, in particular, deer and bear. My fourteen-year-old grandson spent all day, every day in our hunting blind during Thanksgiving week this year and did not observe one deer or bear. Before the two existing solar fields were installed on the west side of this proposed project, we saw deer EVERY day and one or two bear per season. It appears the local wildlife have lost some of their feeding and secluded bedding areas.

Let us construct our solar panel fields in craggy areas, in areas that are not suitable for farming, on rooftops, over reclaimed brown fields, over capped off land fill areas, on negligible areas, not farmland producing human and agricultural foods.

In conclusion, the proposed site of the Mayhew Solar Project is an existing, native wildlife habitat and thriving ecosystem. In addition, if we support our farmers in Vermont, which I believe we do, we must deny this application for another solar project on an active agriculture field. I was denied the opportunity to bring my perspective to the St. Johnsbury Planning Commission and the St. Johnsbury Select Board because, as an adjoiner, I was not notified. Please add the requirement for adjoining landowner notification for all projects that seek Preferred Site Letters from towns.

Respectfully,

Andrew Dussault