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September 11, 2020

Planning Board
Town of Farmington
1000 County Road 8
Farmington, NY 14425

Re: Application of Delaware River Solar to construct a 7 MW solar facility at 466 Yellow Mills Road, PB # 1004-18 Preliminary Site Plan

Dear Planning Board Members:

We represent a group of landowners and residents concerned about the impacts of solar development in the Town of Farmington in connection with application PB # 1004-18 Preliminary Site Plan by Delaware River Solar, LLC (“Developer” or “DRS”) to construct a 7 MW solar facility at 466 Yellow Mills Road (the “Project”).

The Town Code promotes the retention of natural features such as trees, brooks, drainage channels and scenic vistas and requires that, where natural features interfere with a proposed use, the applicant must retain the maximum amount of those features consistent with the use of the property.¹ Accordingly, the Town Code requires that natural vegetation be preserved within the set-back buffer zone and, where possible, augmented.² Plantings must be at a height so as to provide, as much as practicable, a visual screen of the large-scale ground-mounted system from residential uses.³ Ground-mounted solar PV systems may not exceed 12 feet in height and fences may not exceed 8 feet in height⁴

Here, the proposed location of this facility is at an elevation as high as 585 feet: significantly elevated from Yellow Mills Road (approximate elevation 570 feet) and Fox Road (approximate elevation between 550–560 feet). The panels themselves will be up to 12 feet tall

¹ Farmington Zoning Code 165-36.

² Farmington Zoning Code 165-65.3(F)(1)(b).

³ Farmington Zoning Code 165-65.3(F)(1)(b).

⁴ Farmington Zoning Code 165-65.3(F)(1)(b)(6) and (8).

and the proposed fence is 8 feet tall. This board must request and review side elevations from Yellow Mills Road and Fox Road in order to assess what the visual impact of this project would be from the road.

The current site plan⁵ does not provide for landscape screening around the entirety of the proposed project. There does not appear to be any screening of the temporary parking, waste storage, or material drop off areas. Where screening is proposed, it is merely immature, four to six-foot-tall arborvitae, 15 feet on center with a 10 foot offset, which will not provide any screening for decades- if ever- given the elevation differential. It does not appear that a berm is proposed to elevate the arborvitae. While, at the August 5, 2020 Planning Board meeting the Applicant expressed a willingness to address screening, no updated landscaping plan has been provided as of the date of this letter. There must be additional screening provided which will actually screen this project.

Also unclear is the type of fencing proposed. When the project was first introduced to neighbors, it was described as a post and beam style stockade privacy fence. At other times chain link, razor wire, and a deer fence of unknown material have been discussed and/or shown on various drawings. This information is vital in order to assess what this project will look like if built and if it will screen project components as well as fit with the character of the neighborhood. Certainly, a visible 8-foot tall chain link fence with razor-wire has no place in this neighborhood: these are solar panels, not a prison complex.

For the reasons set forth in this letter, we ask you to deny the Developer's application for preliminary site plan at this time and require the Applicant to provide: side elevation renderings showing all proposed project components and screening; and an updated landscape plan which provides for screening of project components.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Bridget O'Toole", written in a cursive style.

Bridget O'Toole

⁵ Revised September 8, 2020