

Sadler, Pam Field

From: Martha Hanner <mhandjh@comcast.net>
Sent: Tuesday, January 4, 2022 12:38 AM
To: Brestrup, Christine
Subject: Please forward to Planning Board Jan. 5 - Need for solar bylaw

Hi Chris,

I see that the individual members of the Planning Board do not have amherstma.gov addresses. Could you please forward my letter to them before the Jan. 5 meeting?

I'd appreciate a brief reply from you confirming that you have received my email.

I can't attend the Jan. 5 meeting, as I will be attempting to fly home from Seattle, amid all the cancelled flights...

Thank you!
Martha

On 01/04/2022 12:29 AM Martha Hanner
<mhandjh@comcast.net> wrote:

Dear Planning Board Members,

As you begin discussing a solar bylaw for our Town and related zoning issues, I'm concerned by the thinking that we must set an arbitrary number of acres of solar panels as our Town's "share". Yes, solar panels are important, but we must not forget that they are only one piece of the solution, which is reducing the atmospheric CO2. We all need to keep the focus on the larger picture, by articulating the broader goal, namely:

Amherst needs to do our share to mitigate carbon dioxide buildup in the atmosphere, including investment in renewable energy, energy conservation, and carbon sequestration.

Our Town already has 2 important Plans for guidance:

The Climate Action Plan created by the ECAC and approved by the Town Council discussed various aspects of this broader goal. Of course, the most cost-effective aspect is to do all we can to reduce our energy consumption, by improving energy efficient buildings, analyzing transportation patterns, etc. while also moving forward with renewable energy.

An overall plan for the siting of solar panels is critical.

There are many creative possibilities within the built landscape that the Planning Board can help facilitate. Parking lots are an obvious starting point, where the costs for developers would be minimal.

Development is not necessarily cheaper outside the built environment.

During your discussion of the moratorium on large-scale ground-mounted solar installations at your December meeting, you seemed to have an

implicit assumption that solar panel installation on forested land would be less expensive for developers, while also agreeing that our Conservation Commission would need to do a thorough job of vetting.

Having listened to the Conservation Commission meetings, where AMP Energy showed an appalling lack of interest in doing the required environmental/wetlands analysis for the Shutesbury Rd. proposal, it was clear that this large-scale developer is unwilling to spend the money or take responsibility to ensure that watershed, drainage, and other environmental issues are properly addressed. Doing the environmental job correctly is expensive, as they obviously know.

For siting on open land, Amherst has a carefully developed Master Plan that we need to take seriously.

The Implementation Matrix (Appendix A) of the Town's Master Plan includes the following stipulations:

Land Use:

- LU.3 Preserve key undeveloped lands
- LU.4 Protect key farmland and farming

Natural and Cultural Resources:

- NC.3 Conserve land in sufficient quantity and quality to meet agricultural, recreational, and wildlife needs
- NC.4 Apply principles of environmental sustainability Town-wide.

Open Space and Recreation:

- O.1 Protect land that provides significant agricultural, watershed protection, trail systems, habitat, and biodiversity attributes.

We need to preserve forested land. As Amazonian forest destruction increases, as well as world-wide forest losses from drought and wildfires, our temperate North American forests become increasingly important for climate balance, including those here in Western Mass.

Published research shows that mature forests actively sequester the most carbon dioxide and that climate balance requires increased removal of CO₂ from the atmosphere as well as reduced CO₂ emission. (Moomaw et al. 2019; Mildrexler et al. 2020)

Thank you for your attention

Martha Hanner
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