

Solar Update  
January 2022

At our December Town Board meeting, I reported on the “94-c” meeting that Supervisor Mettler and I attended with Hecate officials. We raised two significant objections to the “visual simulations” Hecate showed us — pictures of Hecate’s expectations of what the Shepherd’s Run utility-scale solar facility would look like, from various vantage points, after five years. First, the viewpoints Hecate selected did not simulate views of the project from several critical locations: there were no simulation pictures from Birch Hill Road, west of County Route 7, looking north/northwest, nor were there simulation pictures taken directly from the homes on County Route 7, looking east. Second, the “screening” was, as I said last month, “woefully inadequate”. Widely-separated tree saplings did very little to hide views of the solar panels.

It has consistently been this Board’s position that the Shepherd’s Run proposal is too large for our small rural town, and is poorly sited, so Hecate’s screening presentation was especially disappointing. We responded by urging Hecate to screen with mature trees, and to plant them in staggered rows to create denser tree screens. And we took our own photographs from other viewpoints, sent them to Hecate and asked that they prepare new simulations.

To date, there has been no response.

Hecate’s revised Notice of Its Intention to File an Application has set February 18th as its target filing date. Once again, we have to ask: what is the rush? If Hecate really wants to be Copake’s community partner, as it claims, it should act like one. Make Copake’s requested revisions to the proposal *before* filing an application, and if you’re doing so, show us the changes!

And here's another reason why Hecate should hold off on filing a siting application: Hecate knows that soon it will receive a report and recommendations from a working group panel, put together by Sensible Solar and Friends of Columbia Solar, to which Hecate made a formal presentation, apparently identical to the proposal it made to us at the 94-c meeting. This working group includes landscape architects, Cornell University land and environmental experts, Scenic Hudson, and the Columbia Land Conservancy. The working group's expertise should be welcomed by Hecate. It should take the time to thoughtfully consider the recommendations of these experts.

Hecate's goals should extend beyond corporate profits. It should be trying to make Shepherd's Run a facility that doesn't destroy Copake's beloved, picturesque environment and, instead, blends harmoniously into "the land of rural charm".

We urge Hecate to slow it down. Work with us. Get it right.

Thank you.