

Simsbury Fire District

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Mrs. Lisa Heavner – First Selectwoman
Town of Simsbury

Mrs. Heavner:

I am responding to your request to provide some feedback on the proposed solar farm on the Griffin land in the north end of town. I hope to ease some concerns that some in the community have with this project. Chief Baldis and I have reviewed the project with regard to Fire safety and Fire protection for both the facility and the area around the project.

I have met with the company proposing the project and other town officials to discuss the site installation and operation of the facility once it is complete, if built to the scope of the current plan. We have reviewed the possible impact to our firefighting operation and have found no issues that would preclude this project. There will be adequate access around the generator cells and inverters. The type of vegetation under and around these units is under review to determine combustible loads and the owners can accommodate adjustments based on environmental instructions.

The Simsbury FD has been training for the last several years on the installation and operation of solar systems, due to having been installed at various locations in town for many years. We have many systems in town. Most of the systems are on roofs of dwellings.

Our training is on systems that are primarily on the roofs of combustible homes or on large retail buildings such as auto dealerships and the International skating center, however, in some cases in the rear of homes mounted on the ground similar to the farm that is proposed. We have received this training from outside experts in the field and have reviewed the National Fire Protection's technical report document prescribing from The NFPA research center that was developed and written through a grant from FEMA for SOLAR SYSTEMS ON ROOF TOPS. As this paper discusses some system problems in the past, generally the fires that have occurred were on home based combustible building installations and mainly due to improper installation. This

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technology has some years of operations and a track record. There are large solar farms in many states. Over the last several years there have been numerous safety upgrades written into the national codebooks that will preside over the installation here in Simsbury.

Additionally the close proximity to the North end Eversource substation appears to be an advantage. This will be a close receptor for power being supplied and the need for extensive high-tension lines across the town from other locations would not be needed. In fact, there is a possibility that this could be used in place of the line that traverses the mountain from Bloomfield if the line breaks or fails in some way. We have had line failures in the past, causing long duration power interruptions. We have requested information about this possibility.

As far as the proximity to the school, we are very much concerned about anything that goes in and around schools. In fact, it was reported to us that in other areas of the country solar farms have provided some emergency power to schools directly. Some schools in nearby communities have their own solar farms for the school power, which is similar technology. We may not need that option as we have a generator system that is up to date.

We have reviewed the protection plan for children ... or for adults, for that matter, from entering the farm. There appears to be adequate protection with the fencing shown in the development drawings. We have been reassured that adjustments can be made if there appears to be a problem area. There will also be a frequent presence from maintenance personnel monitoring the equipment, cleaning and performing maintenance. We also have strongly suggested that the existing barns be removed, as we believe that the children playing in and around the barns is currently the largest hazard.

I hope this has answered some of your questions. Please either write back or call if I can be of assistance with safety on this project.

Respectfully submitted,

Kevin J Kowalski

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Chief Administrative Officer

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