

**PUBLIC HEARING REGARDING SOLAR PROJECT**  
**MAY 16, 2019**  
**7:00 PM**

**Present:** Mayor Blundell, DM Kovalchik, Trustee Laing, Trustee Norris, Trustee Trapp, Assistant Clerk Drewes. **Absent:** Clerk/Treasurer Chiarella

At 7 pm, Mayor Blundell opened the meeting and lead the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mayor Blundell introduced the members of the Village Board. He explained that he felt some time should be spent on the history and facts about the Community Solar Project; it's time line and purpose. Slides were exhibited and color handouts were available. Blundell pointed out how Villages, and all municipalities in NYS are subject to the 2% tax cap and its relation to the solar project, and how this shared solar project between the Village, Town and the Village of Tivoli is in fact recorded in tax cap related steps we have taken for shared services. He also explained that the site for the solar project was chosen based on the need for an inter-connection point to Central Hudson. Plus, the use of the well fields sets up a co-location that lets us farm the sun for energy and the aquifer; hence the Village taking lead agency for SEQRA.

Mayor Blundell introduced Jeff Irish, VP & General Manager of SunCommon, the company doing the project. Mr. Irish explained with a power point presentation about solar energy, SunCommon's company history, and how ground mounted community solar arrays give many more people access that have no options currently. He stated that the site was chosen because it was suitable and because 3-way power was available on Firehouse Lane that could support a system of this size. He said the current plans are compliant with Town and Village zoning law, but even so, the original set back of 50 feet was pushed to 150 feet to consider the neighbor's property. He stated that the equipment being used is commercial and intended to be kept indoors. Mayor Blundell projected a visual rendering of the vegetative screening and fence that will be installed at the site.

Trustee Trapp read the official Notice of Public Hearing and went over the decorum.

17 people signed in to share comments, and Mayor Blundell advised he would handle calling upon them to speak in order. Blundell also pointed out that the meeting/public hearing had been published in the newspaper and affidavits of publication exist. The public hearing portion was open and begun.

Mark Donchek thanked the board, and proposed that the project should be moved to another location. He feels that the RFP process was not properly conducted, and stated the community was not officially notified or asked for input. He stated that Jeff Irish is named in an impropriety lawsuit in Rhinebeck regarding a solar project, and would like the RFP redone. Mr. Donchek said he was concerned for watershed safety with the potential for toxins to contaminate the aquifer from the panels, and wildlife that lived in the well field before project related tree removal, including the endangered box turtle. He stated the current SEQRA only lists mice as occupying the land. Mr. Donchek reiterated that a new location should be found, as residents were asked for input by the Town and then told the budget couldn't allow for their suggestions.

John Sheehan stated that he believes in green energy, but that he worries about a decreased property value for his home.

Colleen Kurtz agreed with Mr. Donchek, and stated that she feels transparency has been afforded to the residents neighboring the project. She said there was no official notification to residents, and that while SEQRA requires no work be done until the SEQRA process has been completed, the trees in the well-field were already cut down.

Michael Paterno stated he feels the Village should have investigated Monroe financing in 2016 when the process began, and he questioned the finance plan. Mr. Paterno said he is an investment banker with a focus on solar projects, and thinks a discount can be individually attained from Central Hudson. He said that the Village is doing this project “in front of the meter,” but that he personally would do it “behind the meter.”

Chad Dickson introduced himself as a solar developer who supports the project. He stated that he feels this project is well designed, well placed and that he thinks it should go forward.

Nola White stated that she is concerned about the water, the potential for toxins to leak into the aquifer as the technology ages and breaks down.

Roger Husted said that as a former resident and homeowner of a property on Glen Ridge Rd, he has an investment in the community. He feels the project should go forward with assurances of safety – and thinks the technology is good and clean.

Carrie Kittner stated that as a town resident with no access to solar from her home, she bought into a community solar array and believes strongly in them. She supports this project as designed.

Steven Appenzeller said he lives in the town, and mentioned global warming issues. He stated that he supports clean energy and feels that solar energy will contribute to the community energy grid.

Karen Schneller-McDonald introduced herself as a member of the Saw Kill Watershed and a local resident. She stated that all energy sources can have negative environmental impacts, and that while solar is safer than most, there are still risks. She feels the main concern is maintenance and wants mowing on the site only, with no use of herbicides or pesticides. She does not feel that the panels themselves will be the main threat to the aquifer.

Denis Collet introduced himself as a town resident who helped to draft the town’s solar legislation as a member of the Energy Committee. He believes Red Hook would be setting a precedent, and has already with the Climate Action Plan drafted in 2012. He thinks climate change is an existential threat, and that aesthetics of alternative energy won’t matter if the fields and don’t exist. He feels the project must continue and keep its momentum.

David Javscas said he moved to the Village when the Phase II water project was underway. He feels that from his experience, the Board does an excellent job of considering questions and input from residents. Mr. Javscas also stated that he had solar panels installed from Hudson Solar (now SunCommon) and that he was very pleased and is glad the board is open to hearing community input and scientific evidence but trusts their judgment.

Stephanie Mrzyglod stated that she had observed that most of the people supporting the project throughout the public hearing were not neighbors to the project or that they lived elsewhere, and

that the people who were against it were being most directly affected. She is concerned for her property value and the displaced wildlife. She supports clean energy but feels that solar energy should be an individual choice.

Warren Sheprow introduced himself as a Town resident who believes in solar energy, but said he is upset about the lack of transparency surrounding the project. He stated that he felt the Town board had been shady with the removal of the well field trees before SEQRA had been completed, and was concerned about the RFP process and how it was conducted.

Lori Urban stated that she was a Village resident and member of the Town Conservancy Council speaking in support of the project. She explained that she was not able to have solar panels on her home, but could benefit from a community array. She suggested people opposing the project view solar energy as a love letter to the next generation.

Mayor Blundell stated that the Village Board is not “shady,” and that everyone serving has the best interest of the residents in mind. He said that Village engineers and counsel are separate from the town, and that the interests are not the same for the project. Additionally, the project was not kept from the public and has been openly discussed at meetings so if the public wants more information they need to stay engaged. Mayor Blundell also reiterated that the Board would never jeopardize the aquifer, proven by the Village’s continuation of water improvement projects.

Michael Paterno stated that he is an investment banker working with solar communities, and that he fears a profit is being made. Mayor Blundell answered that the Village took the lead agency on SEQRA because the Village is the landowner of the well-field.

Mark Donchek submitted a written copy of his spoken comments to Assistant Clerk Drewes, which will remain on file in the Clerk’s Office.

Two written comments were submitted to the Board by Marie Hull & Yvonne Turchetti (1), and by Karen Schneller-McDonald of the Saw Kill Watershed Community (2) which will be kept on file in the Clerk’s Office.

Mayor Blundell suggested setting a meeting in early June to keep the public hearing on this matter open, which would allow the SEQRA to age 30 days.

A motion was made by Mayor Blundell to continue the Public Hearing regarding the solar project Thursday, June 6<sup>th</sup>, 2019 at 7:00 pm to keep discussion open. Trustee Trapp seconded the motion. All were in favor.

Mayor Blundell outlined the Village’s participation in the 10% challenge for green energy locally, and stated that he feels he is obligated as a community leader to pursue these energy options.

Trustee Kovalchik moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:33 pm. Trustee Trapp seconded the motion. All were in favor.

At 8:33 pm, the meeting was adjourned.

