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Subject: Re: Solar Siting Hearing - We need your help!
Date: Mar 17, 2015 6:38:48 PM EDT
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I regret that I won't be able to attend the legislative solar siting hearing on Mar 24 because, ironically, we have quite a few energy related items on the Middlebury Selectboard Meeting agenda that night to which I'm committed.

Here's a statement from me that can be shared:

I favor solar installations, including well sited large community solar arrays. The Middlebury Energy Committee, on which I serve as well as the Middlebury Selectboard, worked hard on solar siting standards and identifying preferred solar site locations. It did this in collaboration with the Middlebury Planning Commission and the Addison County Regional Planning Commission, which drafted solar siting standards for towns to adapt. Middlebury studied Rutland's solar siting standards as a model and Rutland Selectboard's solar siting resolution, whose language it modified. The Middlebury Selectboard opted to send its own communication to its legislators urging the PSB to be sensitive to its town plan with regard to siting renewable energy projects. The biggest challenge is defining acceptable aesthetics guidelines. Another concern has been ensuring adequate decommissioning provisions.

Middlebury has had several positive experiences with solar developers sensitive to its needs and town plan, beginning with the 2012 solar project on

town land near our police station in collaboration with Acorn Renewable Energy Co-op. Residents are linked to a dashboard showing it's positive results from our energy committee website (www.middleburyenergy.org). When the town considered offsetting its electric in 2014 with another development located in the neighboring town of New Haven, it worked successfully with the developer and New Haven Selectboard to be sure all needs were satisfied. Several solar arrays of varying sizes have been erected on private lands that have surprised some residents and the Middlebury Selectboard by their development velocity, proximity to major roads, and high visibility. This appears to be the case more so with compactly arranged trackers, such as we saw first at Middlebury College and now see in our industrial park along Exchange Street and off Route 7 near a car dealership. The Middlebury Selectboard views Middlebury's largest solar array to date as an example of good siting in being tucked out of any major viewshed on private property near the Residences at Otter Creek. When the developer sought to expand the array further the PSB process worked to deny this. Middlebury applauds and prefers solar developers with good neighbor policies that make strong effort to present their projects for review before the selectboard and abutting property owners.

Middlebury's intention is to be proactive and help guide, not thwart, solar developers in good site selection. It supports well sited solar projects that go toward offsetting Middlebury's electric, including that of its new net zero town office, due to open in 2016. Middlebury intends to share its solar siting work with the state, along with other towns, and hopes the state and PSB will advance good solar siting practices and decisions.

Laura Asermily
Middlebury