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November 5, 2020

Honorable Andrea Stewart-Cousins
President Pro Tem
New York State Senate
188 State Street
Legislative Office Building, Room 907
Albany, New York 12247

Re: Resolution Opposing Shepherd's Run
Town of Copake

Dear Senator Stewart Cousins:

At a Special Meeting of the Copake Town Board held on October 28, 2020, the Town Board unanimously adopted a Resolution opposing the construction of "Shepherd's Run." The Resolution is enclosed. Shepherd's Run is a 500 acre utility scale solar plant capable of producing 60 megawatts of energy being proposed by Hecate Energy Columbia County 1 LLC. The solar arrays would be sited on farmland in the hamlet of Craryville which is in the Town of Copake. Hecate is proceeding under Article 10.

Among other things, the Resolution calls upon the New York State Senate as well as the New York State Assembly and the Governor "*to adopt legislation which would meet the challenges of climate change without violating Home Rule and local zoning powers and which would more fairly distribute the responsibility of confronting Climate Change among all communities throughout the State instead of placing the entire burden on small rural communities*".

In 2017 Copake passed a law limiting the size of utility scale solar installations to 10 acres. At the Zoom meeting when the Resolution was passed, there were over 275 people in attendance and there was extensive public comment. The overwhelming sentiment expressed was against the project. Many people who spoke made clear that they support renewable energy but are opposed to Shepherd's Run because of its size. They expressed frustration that Hecate would be allowed to avoid the local law.

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In Copake we are fully aware of the goal to have 70% of New York State's energy come from renewable energy by 2030. We understand that in order to achieve that goal the State would require an additional 6000 mw of solar energy capacity by 2030.

I personally applaud that goal. But given that there are 932 towns in New York, arguably each town's "fair share" of new solar energy is about 6.5 mw. A town could achieve this with 2 or 3 projects each 10 acres in size. This illustrates that when Hecate proposes a 60 mw project, it is asking Copake to shoulder almost 10 times its expected share of new solar energy.

As the enclosed Resolution states, Copake has engaged in thoughtful planning for the past 10 years. In 2011 we passed a Comprehensive Plan which addressed the need for green energy; in 2014 we passed a Farmland Protection Plan and in 2017, in furtherance of our earlier planning we passed a law which encouraged solar energy but limited utility scale solar projects to 10 acres. The installation of 500 acres of solar panels runs roughshod over a decade of thoughtful planning. Copake is open to and has solar projects, but this one is just too big.

As set forth in the Resolution, Copake is a rural town. Our economy relies on agriculture and tourism. Five hundred acres of panels would not help our economy in any way and on the contrary would blight our countryside, use up prime farmland, destroy open space, hurt tourism and be devastating to property values.

We are urging you to revisit the goals set for renewable energy- not to reduce the goals but to identify a process by which the goals might be met without ignoring local laws and objectives. We see this as a statewide goal which would benefit from a thoughtful statewide conversation.

Thank you.

Very truly yours,

JEANNE E. METTLER
Supervisor

Enclosure