

October 10, 2018

Dear Planning Board,

I would like to respectfully submit a few comments regarding the current discussion of future solar array installations in the Town of Durham.

As one of the owners of what is most likely considered the most controversial solar array in Durham, I feel that my comments should be dutifully read and considered. Most of the people who read my letter will, to some degree, be aware of the various onslaughts against the installation of my solar tracker. I will try to be my personal best and not let the viciousness, nastiness, duplicity, and anger directed at me and my family during last year's campaign against my tracker cloud my judgement.

First, let me state that I fully believe that the world is in grave danger. Humans have known about the dangers of climate change for a long time, but responses have been too little and too slow. In the late 1970s, I first heard about acid rain. If you would have told me then that in 2018 we still would not have any coherent solutions to tackle the problem of environmental degradation, I would have called you a fool. Solar, wind and tidal energy were already discussed in the 1970s. Electric cars were in prototype status and seemed only a few years away. How proud I was when I got my first solar powered Texas Instruments calculator and my first solar powered watch. Again, the young kid that I was back then would be shocked about the lack of progress, but I cannot stop thinking about the astonishment and anger of our grandchildren (and hopefully great-grandchildren) when they read about how little we did when became fully aware of the dire conditions.

Climate change is knocking on our door. There is no denying this. How many more "once-in-a-century" events can we watch on television before we realize that these events now occur several times a year?

There have been many comments about the disruption of scenic roadways by installations such as ground mounted solar arrays, or solar trackers like the one installed on Packers Fall Road in 2017. It is my firm belief that people become accustomed to the appearance of solar arrays within a short amount of time. Indeed, several neighbors who walk by my home tell me that the tracker seems to get smaller all the time. I can't help thinking that there was an outcry when the first automobiles appeared on roadways, and that electric and telephone wires were considered eyesores. Many people did not enjoy the look of satellite dishes for TV reception when they first became popular. History books will tell you that the inhabitants of Paris were less than pleased by the construction of the Eiffel Tower, yet now it is one of the city's most cherished landmarks.

Solar arrays are not the one and only answer to climate change, but they are a big part of the solution. Often times we feel helpless when confronted with the statistics on the degradation of our environment. Some are especially discouraged about the current lack of concern of our

national government, but thankfully we can start a climate revolution on the local level. Solar energy is the first and most immediately satisfying step to reduce the carbon footprint of a household. With the installation of a *properly sized* and *located* solar array, a household can completely offset their energy usage. Finance payments for the solar arrays are usually equivalent or less than prior electricity bills.

Please be mindful about the phrasing that the solar array needs to be *properly sized* and *located*. One cannot simply just install solar arrays anywhere. They must be placed to optimize the sun's rays. Without the potential of fully offsetting the household's energy needs, most households will shy away from the installation of solar arrays. The current proposal does **extremely limit** the locations of future solar arrays, thereby making it much less efficient or beneficial to install a solar array, especially the freestanding solutions such as ground mounted or trackers. Households that are determined to lower their carbon footprint via the use of solar arrays will only face a limited amount of choices if the current proposal goes into effect.

If households are constrained in their installation of solar arrays, there are limited options. Option one would be to clear enough wood line in the back of household lots to reduce the amount of shade given by the trees that populate most of our backyard. Logging these trees is not an option in most cases, since it removes hundreds of trees that have positive impacts on air quality and also reduce possible corrosion. Cost is also a prohibitive factor, since most ethical tree removal companies will charge way beyond what the average household can afford for projects this size.

Option two would be for environmentally friendly households to look for more welcoming communities that have fewer restrictions on solar usage. This would certainly lead to a less diversified population in a town (and state) that faces challenges in retaining younger generations (and their corresponding tax base). Indeed, in spring of 2018 numerous media outlets highlighted the problem NH towns like Durham face due to skilled labor shortages and aging populations. If we want skilled, younger generations to make a home in Durham, we should uphold our progressive reputation and not create impediments to actively caring for the environment.

As a closing thought, I would like to touch upon quite a few comments that I have heard very frequently in the year following the installation of my solar tracker. These comments are often made by a small but very vocal group within our community, and they refer to the scenic values of some of our local roads. As an avid cyclist, runner, hiker and hunter I do believe that I have covered almost every square yard of our community, especially the two roads most mentioned, Packers Falls Road and Durham Point Road. Living on Packers Falls Road, I fail to see where the abundance of vinyl siding, fake wood fences, permanently parked RV's and prefabricated/mobile homes constitutes any level of scenic value. Please be mindful I mean none of this as an insult to the residents on this road, I personally own a house with very un-scenic yellow siding, and do appreciate the variety of architecture on the road. My family actually made a conscious decision to move to Packer Falls instead of a more groomed development because the road felt so much more authentic.

Durham Point Road is a nice road, I cycled it more than any other road in Durham (with the exception of Packers Falls Road), but I still fail to see where it is any more scenic than hundreds of other roads in the state. I sure hope that higher property values does not make a road more scenic?

The town of Durham, the State of New Hampshire and other organizations such as the University of New Hampshire and the Nature Conservancy provide ample scenic recreational areas. Doe Farm, East and West Foss Farm, Thomson Field, Colby Marsh, College Woods are all excellent places to visit.

It is of note to mention that one of these scenic walking trails is directly located between two properties owned by one of the most vocal opponents of effective solar array placement. So instead of walking along a somewhat narrow road with mediocre visibility and facing a potentially distracted driver, one could just make use of this beautiful trail right next to the doorstep.

Respectfully submitted,

Sascha Barth