

CPN-20-081 **Wildcat Renewables LLC, 879 Sanchez Street, San Francisco, Calif. 94114; representing Wanda Polisseni, 16 Beauclaire Lane, Fairport, N.Y. 14450; via Richard J. Milham Jr., Esq., 120 Linden Oaks, Rochester, N.Y. 14625; owner of property at 5575 State Routes 5 & 20 TM #83.00-1-25.120**
Requesting a Sketch Plan Review for Buffalo Road Solar Project (small-scale community solar project on approximately 24 acres of an approximately 60-acre parcel).

Summary of key points:

- Sketch Plan review for a proposed subdivision separating an existing commercial greenhouse property of about 60 acres into two parcels—one for the existing use (about 36 acres including a storm water holding pond) and one for a community solar project (about 24 acres).
- Existing site is partly open farmland (north section along Routes 5&20) and partly wooded (rear and south part). Of the portion designated for the solar project, a significant portion, possibly half, is wooded; the remainder is open field with prime or near-prime soils for agriculture.
- Applicant is in the process of delineating the boundaries of a wetland which appears to be limited to the wooded section of the proposed greenhouse parcel. The wetland report does not address the character of the woodlot to be cleared.
- Proposed solar development site plan shows clearance of approximately 1/3 to 1/2 of the woods (10–15 acres?) and full build-out with solar panels in north-south rows. A 30-foot minimum buffer and a fence are proposed at the perimeter of the solar array.
- No road buffer or landscape treatment are shown on the Sketch Plan.
- A tributary of Sucker Brook crosses the northwest corner of the parcel; the storm water holding pond is a 2018 project of the Canandaigua Lake Watershed Association and others to temporarily divert heavy storm water flows and reduce erosion and nutrient loading into the lake.
- The site lies within the Town's Strategic Farmland Protection Area and contains some prime active farmland. The wooded portion of the parcel is identified as Silver Maple-Ash Swamp, a relatively rare and vulnerable ecological community valuable for providing vital habitat for various birds and mammals (See Open Space Plan p. 9). This community typically appears in poorly drained areas. This ecological community extends to the parcel to the south and to a series of parcels to the northwest, across Routes 5&20 and Buffalo Street Extension for a total of about 190 acres, the Town's largest concentration of this land type.

- Parcel is rated in the middle range (darker green) on the Lands of Conservation Value map.
- Question—Agenda says solar parcel is 24 acres; site plan indicates about 29 acres?

Environmental concerns:

- The proposed project entails wholesale clearance of at least 10 acres of one of the Town's most valuable, rare and vulnerable ecological communities, as well as the loss of active farmland on prime soils.
- The proposed solar array is over twice the size of the three existing multi-acre solar farms in the Town, and is in a particularly conspicuous location with no visual buffering proposed.
- The plans do not address the path of site drainage or ground cover beneath the solar array, the surface treatment of the soils surface below, or any impacts on the existing storm water retention pond.
- Application materials do not address environmental impacts on drainage or habitat from the loss of this section of the Silver-Maple-Ash woodlot. Consultation with a forester to evaluate the character and health of this wooded area would be appropriate.
- Traffic impacts have not been addressed, particularly any visual impact to motorists on Routes 5 & 20 from glare.

Recommendation:

ECB endorses renewable resources in principle, although we are concerned about the impact of the incremental jump from the existing 10-acre solar farms to the proposed 24-acre size. However, the ECB has severe reservation about the selection of this site for a solar installation. The proposed project will remove some 15 acres +/- of prime or near prime farmland from agricultural use, and will remove roughly 10–15 acres of Silver Maple-Ash woodland, a component of the Town's largest concentration of this relatively rare and vulnerable resource. ECB suggests that the applicant look for a site which is already cleared of woods but is not currently productive farmland. If a more appropriate site cannot be found, ECB suggests that the plan be modified to limit the scope of the solar array to the existing open field portion of the site, and to provide a landscape buffer for visual screening from passing motorists.