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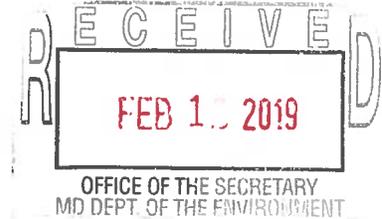
DELEGATE EDITH J. PATTERSON
HOUSE CHAIR

DELEGATE DEBRA DAVIS
DELEGATE ELIZABETH "SUSIE" PROCTOR
DELEGATE C. T. WILSON

THE MARYLAND GENERAL ASSEMBLY
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401
CHARLES COUNTY DELEGATION

February 1, 2019

Ben Grumbles, Secretary
Maryland Department of the Environment
1800 Washington Blvd.
Baltimore, Maryland 21230



RE: Solar Power Project; 4850 Shugart Valley Place, La Plata, Maryland; MD Solar 1, LLC; Wetlands Permit

Dear Secretary Grumbles:

The Charles County Delegation supports the issuance of the wetlands permit for the above referenced project. This recommendation is made after review and evaluation of the proposed projects, its benefits and potential impacts.

According to the United States Energy Information Administration, the majority of energy consumed in the State of Maryland comes from out-of-state sources. Additionally, Maryland's electricity consumption exceeds its net generation. In assessing this situation and balancing the need to balance economic growth with environmental protections, Maryland has established one of the most aggressive renewable portfolio standard goals in the country aiming for 25% of its power to be renewable by 2020, including 2.5% from solar sources.

In 2016, the Public Service Commission of Maryland ("PSC") initiated a study focused on Maryland's electric distribution systems and the need to ensure that such systems "are customer-centered, affordable, reliable and environmentally sustainable." As part of that review, the PSC commissioned a study of the benefits and costs of solar energy within the State of Maryland. Released in November of 2018, the report found that solar energy will provide economic, health, and environmental dividends for the State of Maryland by generating over 23,468 job-years, over \$1.39 billion in labor income and tax revenue for the State of Maryland. More importantly, solar energy will provide long-term health benefits as well as improved reliability of the electrical grid for the surrounding community.

Charles County's 2016 Comprehensive Plan, following the State of Maryland's lead, adopted the goal of "Grow[ing] a green economy with an increased number of jobs in the clean energy and energy efficiency sector." Unlike the remainder of the State of Maryland, Charles County has the distinction of being at the forefront of exporting energy as opposed to importing energy. The Delegation supports such projects so long as they benefit the community, are consistent with land use plans, and are environmentally sustainable.

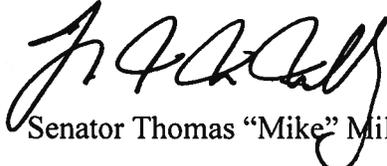
In the present case, the MD Solar 1's Shugart Solar Power Project has already been subjected to extensive review and public outreach via neighborhood meetings and the public hearing process associated with both a Special Exception and CPCN approval. At the conclusion of these hearings and based on the supporting evidence, the Special Exception was unanimously approved with conditions. Such conditions were designed to ensure the required balance between the large scale utility project, community needs and potential impacts. It is our understanding that the Project's design, not only optimized opportunities to avoid and minimize environmental impacts consistent with state and local codes, but in many instances exceeded regulatory requirements

It is always important to weigh environmental impacts, to include the cutting of trees and impacts to waterways. In evaluating the present case, the Delegation has noted the fact that the current zoning of the subject property would allow the land to be timbered, cleared for agricultural purposes or used for other by right purposes (such as residential) without any need for a special exception and corresponding conditions. The Delegation believes that solar projects are far less impactful, disturbing and contain less impervious surfaces than other by right residential and commercial uses. The Delegation also finds that MD Solar 1's proposed implementation of pollinators will allow the Project to remain in agricultural production and benefit the community at large. Finally, it is the Delegation's understanding that the Project proposes to preserve a large swath of contiguous forest containing up to 250 acres. The preservation of this forested area in perpetuity will allow for the regeneration of a substantial amount of forested land and further the County's goal of using its regulatory controls to increase large areas of preserved forest.

In conclusion, the Delegation is of the opinion that so long as the Project meets all regulatory requirements, it will provide long-term environmental, health, energy and economic benefits to the Charles County community. As noted above, this Project will use the land for green infrastructure and placing the residual 250 acres into a Conservation Easement protects these trees as opposed to leaving their future uncertain, i.e. timbering and clearing as permitted by existing zoning.

Sincerely,


Delegate Edith J. Patterson


Senator Thomas "Mike" Miller



Delegate C.T. Wilson



Senator Arthur Ellis



Delegate Elizabeth "Susie" Proctor



Delegate Debra Davis