

July 31, 2023

To: Town of Shaftsbury Select Board

From: Shaftsbury Planning Commission

Re: VT Real Estate Holdings LLC case # 23-1447PET

General

The Shaftsbury Town Plan, adopted August 2019, includes the following goal: support installations of renewable energy sources to meet 25% of energy needs from renewable sources by 2025, 40% by 2035, and 90% by 2050. The construction of the Shaftsbury Solar project, referenced above, would allow us to meet this goal. It is the recommendation of the Shaftsbury Planning Commission that the Shaftsbury Select Board support the project, with conditions as follows.

Specific recommendations

Scale: The scale of this project is shocking to some Shaftsbury residents. In the interest of reducing the scale and creating more separation from existing residences, we recommend that the two most northerly groups of solar panels either be relocated or deleted from the project. This is shown on the project site plan as Attachment A.

Puckerbrush management: Thirty acres of forest is proposed to be removed. The developers state that the stumps will be grubbed out. Even so, over the twenty-five year life of the project, regrowth of brush will be a continuing maintenance issue. We recommend that the PUC include a provision that no herbicides be used on this site. Instead, vegetation should be managed in such a way as to protect our agricultural and working landscapes, through the use of pastured sheep, goats or other livestock. The result? Fuel, fiber and food!

Water line: The water line serving the villages of South Shaftsbury and North Bennington passes thru the center of the project site. The developer proposes to replace it as part of the project. We recommend that as a condition for project approval the PUC require approval of the water line relocation by both the Shaftsbury and North Bennington Water Boards.

Incentives: The Planning Commission recommends that the Shaftsbury Select Board require Shaftsbury Solar to be a good corporate citizen and to create significant incentives for the Town to support the Shaftsbury Solar project.