



Francie Nolde

22 hrs ·

I'm supporting a Solar Farm proposed for Boxborough. I wrote the following comment to the Planning Board about it:

At the Planning Board meeting on November 20, 2017, I heard a couple of Board members express their doubts and concerns about placing a 5MW solar array at 1414 Mass Avenue. I think I understand most of the expressed concerns and would like to respond to them as a private citizen who has tried to bring solar to Boxborough with minimal results. The reason for that lack of success is attributable to a number of issues which I will identify below. After you read about the roadblocks, you will understand why the the Green Street Solar Power proposal is likely to be the only and last possibility for the town to benefit from a large-scale commercial solar project or any further solar development through municipal efforts or homeowners.

1. Solar Bylaw: We have no solar bylaw and that's of concern to some people. Perhaps some Board members could find towns of our size and character that have solar bylaws to see if there are points made that would rule out this solar development. If not, you might consider not denying a permit based on the basis of not having a solar bylaw, but begin work on creating one. And let the proposal stand on its merits.
2. MA solar programs: For the next few years, 1414 Mass Ave. is likely to be the only and last commercial solar proposal we receive. We've been informed that MA is ending its current solar program, replete with rebates, in March of 2018. Municipal light plants (MLPs) were allowed to participate until now but MA will proceed with new programs that don't include MLPs. Boxborough won't be eligible to participate in any solar development, via homeowners, commercial outfits, or municipal plans until MLPs are granted the same rights as for-profit power companies.
3. Size: Some people are concerned with the size of 5 megawatts. This is the maximum allowed. Since the array will be at the end of the 236 acres (I believe that's the correct acreage), and not visible from any vantage point, it might be wise to have the largest possible size to reap the benefits. The benefits are taxes to the town, solar electricity offered to residents at a discount, and the environmental benefits of sequestering carbon at a rate of 40 times more than that of the cut trees, on an annual basis. Remember, only a few acres of trees will be cut, not the total 25 acres.
4. Development: Can we assume Lincoln Properties bought Cisco's 236 acres in order to develop the land? If so, doesn't that mean we'll get commercial buildings, instead of a "solar farm," which won't offer the same benefit to the town or our environment?
5. Municipal buildings and land: the Energy Committee has had energy professionals look at municipal buildings, parking lots, and acreage to install solar arrays. They came up empty. The roofs are too old and don't have the proper siting, some buildings will be replaced, the parking lots aren't large enough (like Cisco's), and the Transfer station's capped dump is only 2 and a half acres. To achieve an acceptable ROI, one needs a minimum of 5 acres. The town owns two possible sites, the Hager Land being one of them which would be ideal, but there is no money, interest to take out a large loan, or will on the part of our Town leaders.
6. Lost opportunities: If we look at lost opportunities for solar, we can turn to new development such as Paddock Estates and the Town Center project proposed by Toll Brothers. No solar. Furthermore, if you notice the types of roofs that are being built on new houses, you'll see many different angles along with many dormers, making it impossible to find enough space/footage to place solar panels.

When the Energy Committee ran the LittleBoxSolar program, out of 2000 households, about 200 expressed interest. We achieved a 10% installation rate from that number, which is average. The reasons for not installing more was that LELD would not allow leasing from a 3rd party, the town is heavily wooded so many homes were

too shaded, roofs had to be replaced to hold an array for 25 years, a long, long playback period, and the total cost. Furthermore, I contacted every business in town to encourage them to consider putting up solar panels. Only one seemed interested but never followed through with getting an estimate. Many businesses in town lease their property and while I tried, no owners responded.

So, unfortunately, to hope the town will provide solar energy through other means than a solar farm is a pipe dream. And I've been told by energy professionals that wind is not an option.

7. LELD: Our Municipal Light Plant (MLP) purchases 91.9% fossil and nuclear fuel, with 8.1% renewables. Hence, we have to support more renewables and less fossil fuels to mitigate climate change. LELD is willing to enter into a power purchase agreement with Green Street Solar, which is a step forward.

Also, LELD is not interested in contributing to the Renewable Energy Trust (RET), which would allow Boxborough to become a Green Community. The RET delivers money for grants that are given to Green Communities for energy projects. But we will never be eligible for those grants which could be used to install a solar array of any size.

In summary, Boxborough is up against many factors that make it impossible to place solar panels around town. We all support solar and wind, but the realities are that the opportunities are very limited.

I suggest we consider Green Street Solar Power LLC as a solution to our dilemma.

Thanks for taking comments from the public.

Sincerely,
Francie Nolde
459 Sargent Road
Boxborough, MA 01719