

6572 Dunnsville Road  
Altamont, NY 12009

October 13, 2020

Town of Guilderland Planning Board  
Town of Guilderland Zoning Board  
Guilderland Town Hall  
PO Box 339  
Guilderland, NY 12084

RE: Proposed Helios Energy New York 13, LLC Solar Array located at 6580  
Dunnsville Road, Altamont, NY 12009

Dear Board Members:

This letter is presented in disagreement with the variance request for the above project. Below is an overview of all the discrepancies and issues we see with this variance requested:

1. First, the public notice we received in the mail for this meeting stated the variance request was proposing a 30 foot setback where a 150 foot setback is required. If you look at the variance application itself, nowhere in that document does it mention this variance nor which boundary they are asking the variance on. The variance application itself states they want to only clear 38 acres of the property instead of the required 20,000 square feet outlined in the Town's supplemental regulations section 280-4U for large scale solar energy systems. The application needs to be revised to include **all the requests** they are asking for, in detail, as well as their reasons for the requests.
2. Second, the arborist's report clearly states the apple trees are pretty inactive (dead) with vines and prickers growing over them. Please see the enclosed photo labeled **6572Autumn** which shows our view of the Heldeberg escarpment from our backyard and the existing trees. Ever since Altamont Orchard stopped maintaining this field, they have allowed us to cut down any hardwoods that grow up blocking our view. As can be seen in the photo, the vines and prickers have made this area pretty much impenetrable. Once the property ownership is transferred from Altamont Orchards to Mr. Muia we will no longer be able to cut down any hardwoods to keep our view. We believe these dead trees would be a significant fire hazard if left behind. Solar farms of this size are known for an increased likelihood of lightning strikes just due to the size of the area. Leaving dead trees is like leaving kindling in a ring around the solar array which could lead to a major forest fire. **Since this property is zoned agricultural, we recommend cutting these trees off at the ground (as to not disurb the soil) and plant grass around the perimeter of**

**the fence around the solar array which Mr. Muia can cut for hay--we know he cuts his fields a couple times a year).** This would allow access all the way around the array for fire fighters to fight any fire (not just behind our houses but also on the side facing the cliff). We checked Dunnsville Road and there are only three fire hydrants which could provide water for any fire at the solar array. One is in front of 6560 Dunnsville Road which is shown on the far left of the **Zillowsatellite** photo enclosed. There are only two more hydrants between that property and Becker Road, both of which are on Altamont Orchard property. We know the hydrant in front of 6560 Dunnsville Road has a larger size pipe than the other two but still don't believe the pipe sizes are adequate to fight any sizable fire on that property. **May we ask if a fire risk assessment has been done for this solar farm? If so, may we ask what protections will be put in place to mitigate any risk?** We want our properties safe from any dangers.

5. Please see the other enclosed photos showing views from our property as well as 6584 Dunnsville Road which is currently owned by the Cotons, These photos show just how much of the solar farm we have in our view at Spring, Autumn and Winter. The only time the existing trees may screen a little bit of the solar farm would be in the summer when the leaves are on the trees, depending on how many are left behind. Please note that the Cotons never received the public notice, are currently renovating their house and have not occupied it yet. We notified them of this meeting and stated they would like the same solar panels screened so they can enjoy the same views of the Heldebergs as well as other views they have looking across those fields. Both properties (6572 and 6584) have a full view of the solar array when the trees lose their leaves as shown in the photos. We just want to block the view of the solar panels yet maintain our view. We believe this could be achieved by planting a low growing evergreen (that deer don't like to eat) that would grow just enough to block the view of the solar panels. The location of where these trees are planted would determine how tall the trees would have to be.
5. Enclosed is another photo entitled **Zillowsatellite** which shows all three properties on the front boundary 6580 Dunnsville Road. As can be seen in the photo, our two houses (6572 and 6584) are both very close to the back property line. Although the boundaries shown in the photo aren't perfect (it shows the boundary in the middle of our garage when, in fact, they meet the Town's code and the back property line is a little farther into the field) it does show just how close our two houses are to our back property lines. These houses were built close to the back property line so we could enjoy the views from the top of that hill. Our house was built in 1994 and 6584 was built in the 1960s, way before a solar farm was ever proposed. We believe we were told the solar panels will articulate on a post. **Will any of the solar panels ever face towards our houses thereby shining on our homes during the daytime?** This would be another reason we would want evergreen screening from the glare from the solar panels.
6. We believe the solar panels in slide 1 of the visual assessment are **too close** to our property lines. They need to be pulled down away from our property lines a bit (to

match the site plan). Also **image 4 on the visual assessment needs to be removed** as that photo was taken from the road and not from the back of the property boundary of the orchard. The property shown in image 4 was actually an access from the road to 6560 Dunnsville Road, not 6561. Whomever included that photo in the visual assessment got the number from the mailbox which was located on that piece of property. All mailboxes on Dunnsville Road are on our side of the road. The back of 6560 Dunnsville Road is filled with hardwood trees so it would be open to the orchard as well when the trees have no leaves on them. **Helios Energy never approached us to take photos from our properties for the visual assessment.** We believe this was deliberate as they don't want to clear those dead trees and want to do the minimum amount of clearing to save themselves money.

We respectfully request our questions be answered and the corrections be made to the variance application (showing both requests) and the visual assessment (showing views from ALL properties to the solar farm in the winter). We also request the enclosed photos be included in the visual assessment so the Boards have a full and fair view of who this solar farm will affect. If the Board looks at the enclosed photos they can clearly see we are very much affected visually by the solar farm. Helios Energy should show the solar farm panels on those photos in the visual assessment, not from thousands of feet in the air.

If Helios wants a variance for just the boundary between the solar farm and Mr. Muia's current property, and Mr. Muia is agreeable, we have no problem with that but want to know why they need that variance. We do not support any variance for our boundaries with 6580 Dunnsville Road. We want the regulated distance and the necessary safety and view protections. We are not against a solar farm. We actually are the ones who recommended they purchase this field from Altamont Orchards to move the solar farm as it would affect a lot less people visually. We just want to ensure the necessary protections are in place. **PLEASE PROTECT OUR VIEWS!**

Thank you for your consideration on this important matter. We plan on calling in during the meeting so feel free to ask us any questions at that time.

Sincerely,

Handwritten signatures of Donna and Allen Armstrong. The signature on the left is 'Donna Armstrong' and the signature on the right is 'Allen Armstrong'. Both are written in cursive.

Donna and Allen Armstrong

Enclosures









11/03/2019 17:10

