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Case # 2024-00406

My name is Aaron Cobb, and I live in Dunmor. I have read Lost City's response to how this Industrial Solar Complex is compatible with the scenic surroundings. All of what Lost City is claiming can be easily disputed and disproved. I want to provide the PSC with ease of reading, so I have copied Lost City's response in black and my response to what they are claiming is in blue.

Explain how this project is compatible with scenic surroundings.

Lost City Response:

The solar facility would offer scenic benefits because of professionally planned, engineered and designed landscape to blend the solar facility into the surrounding environment, thus enhancing the aesthetics. Through strategic placement and planting of native trees and vegetation, a mini ecosystem would be established, leading to improvements in biodiversity.---- First, just because you use nice sounding language such as professionally planned, strategic placement or improvements in biodiversity does not change the facts. Is Lost City claiming that the "mini ecosystem" that is created by the planting of a double row of "native trees and vegetation" going to replace the entire ecosystem of 1425 acres? How is changing the entire ecosystem of 1425 acres going to lead to "improvements in biodiversity"? The reality is that it is not!

Additionally, the solar facility would utilize practices like solar grazing, where sheep are used to maintain the land, creating a more natural and aesthetically pleasing scene. How are sheep that are grazing under solar panels "creating a more natural and aesthetically pleasing scene"? Would not sheep grazing on rolling hills with a ridge line of mature timber be more pleasing? Also, how are the sheep even going to be seen if they are under 10 foot tall solar panels? The reality is that they are not!

The Project Site is currently used as agricultural land for corn, soybeans, hay, poultry, cattle, sheep, and goats as well as forested areas. The surrounding areas are primarily agricultural, rural residential, and forested. As noted by Richard Kirkland in the Property Value Impact Analysis (SAR Appendix A), the solar panels would be similar in height (approximately 10 feet) to a typical greenhouse and lower than a single-story residential dwelling. A single- family housing development would have a much greater visual impact on the surrounding area as a two-story home with an attic could be three to four times as high as these proposed panels. Is Lost City wanting us to believe that if this project was converted to residential housing the viewshed impact would be more than solar panels? Most residential housing developments are sold in lots, some with varying acre tracts of land. If someone purchases an acre tract of land, there is typically one home on that property. The remainder of the land is green grass with landscaping. How would covering the entire acre with black solar panels be more visually appealing than a home with grass and landscape surroundings? Also, with the topography of this land, there are areas that are not feasible to build a home—as opposed to Lost City

leveling the land and covering the entire area in solar panels. Suggesting a solar field is more visually appealing than a residential neighborhood is absurd.

Solar facility operations are a passive use of the land that is in keeping with a rural/residential area. As identified above, solar facilities are comparable to larger greenhouses. This is not surprising given that a greenhouse is essentially another method for collecting passive solar energy. The use of greenhouses is well-received in residential/rural areas and has a similar visual impact as a solar facility. I understand that Lost City is attempting in every way to convince the PSC that this project will not affect the viewshed. But, comparing a greenhouse to a solar facility is a huge stretch, even for Lost City. I do agree that a greenhouse is accepted in the rural setting. A greenhouse is a form of agriculture where plants are grown, sold, and then planted to increase the beauty of the area where they are growing. A greenhouse increases green spaces as opposed to an industrial solar complex that will cut down all the trees and doze over all the green native vegetation, ultimately leveling the hills. How can you compare removing all carbon removing trees and vegetation to a greenhouse that makes/grows carbon removing vegetation? Lastly, who clears 1,400 acres of land to build greenhouses? I have never seen a 1,400 acre industrial greenhouse complex.

To mitigate the viewshed impacts, the Applicant revised preliminary plans to increase distances to residences from solar panels, inverters, and the substation, where feasible (SAR Appendix B). Existing vegetation between the Project Site boundary and nearby roadways and homes would be left in place, to the extent feasible, to help minimize visual impacts and screen the Project from nearby homeowners and travelers. So is Lost City wanting us to believe that as we are traveling along Highways 949 & 431, Forgy Mill Rd. or Mason Poyner Rd. we are not going to see a sea of black solar panels because they leave a 200ft buffer? Is that 200ft buffer going to keep all residents of Dunmor and Penrod from being forced to look at an 8 foot tall fence with a sea of black solar panels behind them?

Additionally, to minimize viewshed impacts and provide screening, the Applicant would adhere to the landscape plan presented in SAR Appendix E and implement planting of native vegetation (e.g., trees and bushes) as a visual buffer to mitigate visual viewshed impacts in areas where those viewshed impacts occur from residences or roadways directly adjacent to the Project, and there is not adequate existing vegetation. In these areas, the Applicant would add a double planting of native vegetation (40 feet thick and at least six feet at maturity in four years). The double planting would be between Project infrastructure and residences, or other occupied structures, with a line of sight to the facility to the reasonable satisfaction of the affected adjacent property owners. How is a double row of vegetation that is 6 foot tall at maturity in 4 years going to block the view of solar panels that are 10 foot tall? Reality is, they are not! I have also spoken with multiple adjoining and adjacent property owners, and NO ONE from Lost City has made any contact with anyone I have spoken with to see what would meet their "reasonable satisfaction" for view shed impacts.

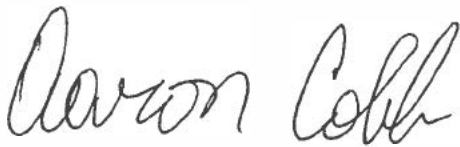
Planting of vegetative buffers/screening would be done over the construction period; however, the Applicant would prioritize vegetative planting at all periods of construction to reduce viewshed impacts. All planting would be completed prior to the operation of the facility, which would help ensure that the Project's compatibility with the scenic surroundings. The Applicant developed the landscape plan to provide screening and would monitor that the proposed new vegetative buffers are successfully established and grow as expected over time. Should vegetation used as buffers die, the Applicant would replace plantings as necessary. Once operational, solar facilities do not create emissions, noise or any additional traffic. The solar facility functions unnoticed without creating disruptions to the community, society and neighbors. The solar facility would offer Agrivoltaics by creating improved habitats for wildlife, insects and pollinators. How does Lost City expect 1,400 acres of solar panels to be unnoticed? How does Lost City expect the hum of inverters not to be heard? Are all inverters going to be encased in a sound-proof room? If not, then the inverters will be heard by adjoining landowners, thus creating a disturbance to the community, society, and neighbors! I would like Lost City to explain how removing all the trees and native vegetation is considered improving the habitat for squirrels, rabbits, deer, racoons, opossums, birds, coyotes, and all other living animals that call the forest and fields their home? How is replacing all the natural landscape with "native grasses" "creating improved habitats for wildlife, insects and pollinators"? The answer is, IT IS NOT!

Witness: Marty Marchaterre

I appreciate your time and careful consideration of this matter as the lives and cultural wellbeing of our rural community will be impacted for generations to come if the Lost City project is approved as is currently being proposed. Please ensure our property values & viewsheds remain intact by instituting a minimum 1,000-foot setback from all property lines. Thank you!

Sincerely,

Aaron Cobb

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Aaron Cobb". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial 'A'.