



October 18, 2019

Gwen Wright  
Planning Director,  
Montgomery County Planning Department  
Maryland-National Capital Area Park and Planning Commission  
8787 Georgia Avenue  
Silver Spring  
Maryland 20910

Dear Ms. Wright,

I am writing on behalf of the Montgomery County Group of the Sierra Club's Maryland Chapter.

We have been made aware of Turning Point Energy's proposal for development of a community solar project on a plot of agriculturally zoned land on Fieldcrest Road, in the Laytonsville area. We are aware that there are environmental considerations that need to be taken into account in responding to the proposal, including the fact that the land is currently being used as pasture for cattle, that there is a stream on the property which has apparently been degraded to some extent by the cattle and their waste, and that there are additional water- and potentially forest-related factors that must be considered. We are aware that Turning Point is in discussion with your office about potential ways to mitigate these environmental factors.

We are not in a position to offer an opinion on the appropriateness of the specific potential approaches that might be taken to make the proposed community solar project both financially feasible and environmentally sound. We strongly feel that the decision about these aspects appropriately resides with the expertise and authority of your department and the developer's experience in solar project development.

We do want to convey that Sierra Club as a whole, the Maryland Chapter, and the Montgomery County Group all strongly support the development of community solar if the County, M-NCPPC, and the developer can arrive at a satisfactory plan. (Sierra Club Maryland Chapter has the experience of interacting with Prince George's County in the development of their solar siting policy, and note that



the Prince George's Planning Department under M-NCPPC worked with another solar developer to meet reforestation requirements on the Panorama landfill in a way that allowed the building of a community solar project on that landfill.)

We definitely support solar development on rooftops, parking lots, schools and public buildings. We also recognize that the potential of community solar to provide hundreds of households with locally generated clean renewable energy will require solar projects built on open land. The Fieldcrest Road project would be our county's first ground-built community solar project. As recently reported (<https://bethesdamagazine.com/bethesda-beat/climate-change-activists-accuse-montgomery-county-of-inaction/>), we know that our county needs to get moving to make the transition to clean renewable energy, a goal to which the county is publicly committed.

We therefore appreciate your willingness to actively explore and consider options that might make the project viable. I would be happy to speak with you further if that is in any way helpful.

Sincerely,

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