

MEMO from Sierra Club National regarding ZTA 20-01

By: Mark Kresowik, Deputy Regional Director, Beyond Coal Campaign, Sierra Club

Date: January 25,2021

In the past few weeks, the Sierra Club has received questions regarding the position taken by the Montgomery County Sierra Club on the proposed Solar ZTA. We have also seen some webpages and emails which have improperly interpreted Sierra Club national policy to suggest the local Group is out of compliance. I am writing this letter to clarify the proper Sierra Club policy to consult, and to everyone that the Group is acting consistently and in consultation with the national Sierra Club.

The Sierra Club supports Zoning Text Amendment 20-01 (ZTA 20-01). Our position, as determined through Sierra Club's democratically-determined processes and consistent with current policies regarding [energy resources](#) and [siting of renewable energy on public lands](#) as enacted by the Board of Directors, has been shared with [our members](#) and [decision-makers](#), as well as in the [Washington Post](#). Passing ZTA 20-01 is a responsible, thoughtfully considered approach to following through on Montgomery County's climate protection commitments while creating jobs, bringing in much-needed revenue, and continuing the traditions of environmentally-responsible agriculture. The Sierra Club absolutely does support study and dissemination of information about the best locations and best practices for solar development, however we also support appropriate siting of solar projects now. Our climate, our health, and our economy cannot afford to wait.

Several websites and emails in circulation have cited an outdated Sierra Club policy from 1978 regarding energy facilities siting. That policy has since been explicitly superseded by the Sierra Club's elected Board of Directors when it enacted and updated our Energy Resource Policy and Guidelines on Transmission and Large Scale Renewable Energy Production on Public Lands linked above, due to the development of new clean energy resources and the urgency of climate protection. The Sierra Club's processes to implement our policies are in place to prevent precisely the kind of misinformation circulating. We ask that everyone use this information, and inquire if there are questions, before circulating inaccurate or outdated information about our policy.

We would be delighted to discuss mutual support from the County and State for opportunities to further direct solar development to the most optimal sites after the hopeful passage of ZTA 20-01, as we have with other partners throughout this process. We do believe both levels of government can and should do more to provide incentives for such responsible development, but that should not preclude solar development by right in certain areas that are not habitat for endangered or threatened species.

Sincerely,

Mark Kresowik
Deputy Regional Director
Beyond Coal Campaign
Sierra Club

Cc: Montgomery County Executive Mark Elrich
Montgomery County Council President Hucker, Council Members
Josh Tulkin, Director, Sierra Club Maryland
Shruti Bhatnagar, Chair, Montgomery County Group, Sierra Club Maryland