

Bem-Ti-Vi, Solar LLC 150kW Group Net Metering Project  
Host Landowner: Ersilia, John and Julie Fago  
1037 Christian Hill Road, Bethel, Vermont

Suncommon 150kW CSA Project  
Host Landowner: Rebecca Castellano  
1696 Christian Hill Road, Bethel, Vermont

Comments in Opposition of two commercial-sized  
solar arrays on Christian Hill Road in Bethel

December 6, 2015

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To: **Bethel Town Selectboard:** Carl Russell, Bill Hall, Lisa Hill

**Bethel Town Planning Commission:** Andrew Delaney, chair  
Peter Dohrn, Cecil Washburn, Carla Hodgdon, Fred Dieffenbach

**Bethel Town Development Review Board:** Eric Benson, chair  
Bob Leister, Ruth Clough, Chuck Washburn, Newt Whitcomb, Keith Bollman,  
Penny Griffin, Greg Hughes, Kent Batcheller

**Legislators:** Dick McCormack, Sandy Haas

### **Introduction**

For the common good of the town of Bethel and to uphold all the work that has gone into the Bethel Town Plan and Zoning Plan, we respectfully request that our zoning ordinances are upheld and defended.

While we are in favor of renewable alternatives, we would like to be sure the siting of commercial solar arrays is done similar to the Dartt Hill project—out of sight and aesthetically aligned with the Town Plan.

**We would respectfully ask that officials from our town administration request Public Service Board hearings and contest the violations that the two proposed arrays on Christian Hill Road impose upon Bethel.**

**As we understand it, the deadline is December 20, 2105** for objections to the Suncommon Project. The Bem-Ti-Vi, Solar LLC 150kW Group Net Metering Project deadline is within the same time period.

The Town of Morgan has similarly become an intervenor with the Public Service Board ([http://vce.org/NM-6633\\_SLSolar\\_2015\\_09\\_30.pdf](http://vce.org/NM-6633_SLSolar_2015_09_30.pdf)). The Town of New Haven has also become an intervenor for their own public good in a similar case. (See attached.)

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**A. Bethel Town Plan violations**

**1) There are now two Projects clearly violating the very tenets of the Bethel Town Plan, opposing Clear-Written Community Standards.**

- The commercial-sized Projects are proposed in a medium-density residential area.
- Bethel Town Plan, page 47: “commercial solar facilities should be developed so as to avoid negative impacts on the character of the area in which they are proposed”
- Town Plan, page 47: “because photovoltaic collectors are reflective, they have the potential to create harsh and blinding lights that could be a hazard”

**2) Bethel Town Plan, page 59, 1X. Natural, Scenic and Cultural Resources**

“Bethel residents value open, working lands. . . The fundamental goal of this Plan is to sustain and enhance the integrity and diversity of the natural resource system with Bethel . . . It is the policy of the Town to develop and implement practices that conserve natural resources and to insure that future land use activities are not detrimental to the environment.”

**Goals, page 59**

1. Protect the natural, scenic, and historic character of Bethel.

**Policies, page 61**

5. It is the policy of the Town that development in Bethel shall be permitted only if it does not cause any significant environmental degradation and does not result in an adverse impact on ground or surface waters.

**3) Projects violate Bethel Zoning Ordinance**

Note on page 30 of the Bethel Zoning Ordinance that these projects should be disallowed:

“no structure in any district . . . which might adversely affect the reasonable use of the surrounding area or adjoining properties.”

**B. Applicant provided inaccurate information about access**

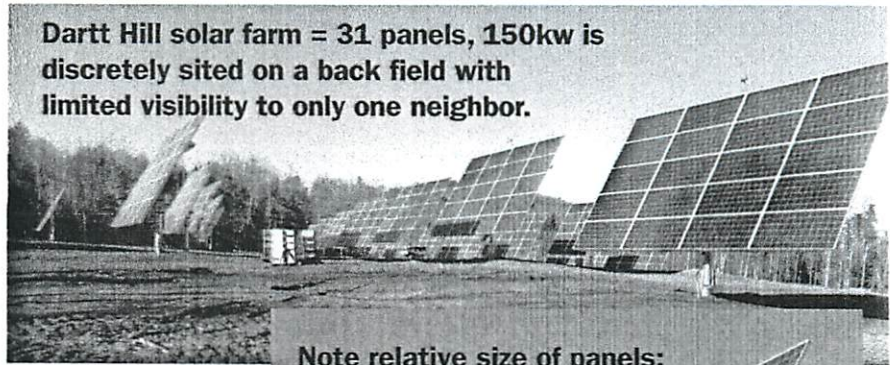
The original Project proposal from Bem-Ti-Vi, Solar LLC (dated October 27) incorrectly stated that “no public infrastructure or investments will experience adverse impacts . . . of the Project Access as stated by BTV is not via the landowner’s access but by constructing an access road off Christian Hill Road requiring additional culvert for proper roadside drainage, therefore negating the Project statement that “earth disturbance will be limited.” The newest Project proposal from Ben-Ti-Vi indicates the same poorly designed access.

This proposed access was located on the hillside where winter conditions routinely cause drivers to slide off the road. Note: access off TH-59, which is established as a Class 4 Town Road, would have less impact on town residents and would re-open the now-blocked entrance to this road for town residents.

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**C. Conceptual Site Plan does not harmonize with surroundings**

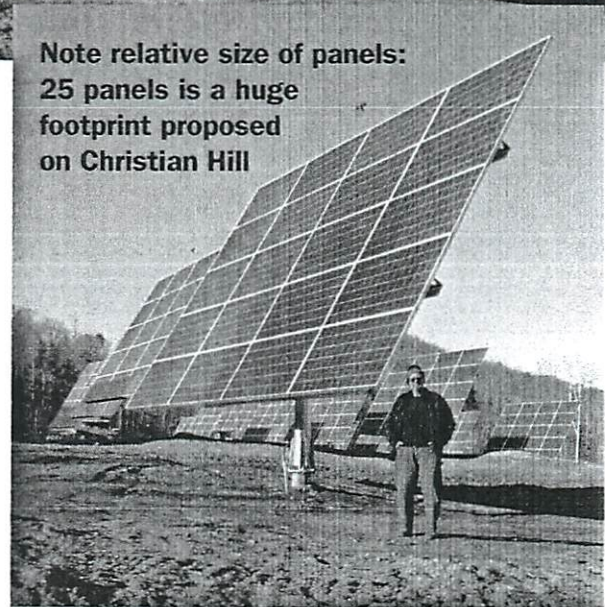
We do not see evidence that either Applicant has taken mitigating steps to improve the harmony of the Project with surroundings. Both Conceptual Site Plans clearly demonstrate clearing trees and reducing forestation in both locations.



**Dartt Hill solar farm = 31 panels, 150kw is discretely sited on a back field with limited visibility to only one neighbor.**

**D. No plan for the future. What will become of this e-waste in 25 years?**

Solar arrays have an expected lifespan of at least 25 years. While we believe in renewable energy and believe that we should move away from carbon-based fuels, we must object to the disregard for the potentially dangerous materials in solar arrays: cadmium, selenium, and sulfur hexafluoride—a potent greenhouse gas. We request that the town officials ask for plans for decommissioning and site restoration funds from the Public Service Board.



**Note relative size of panels: 25 panels is a huge footprint proposed on Christian Hill**

The Bem-Ti-Vi Solar Project is located uphill from natural resource Ansel Pond. Bethel's Town Plan notes this area as a Significant Natural Area, page 70. What will happen to Ansel Pond in the future as a recipient of solar array waste? Since impact on environment is unknown, we request that town officials ask Public Service Board for a hearing to question the plans for safeguarding the area.

**E. Current use violations**

Project at 1037 Christian Hill Road is on property in current use.

**F. Home devaluation**

Both solar array projects will be eyesores and detrimental to home values on both Christian Hill and Sanders Roads. These proposed Projects are not discrete in any manner.

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**Conclusion**

We recognize the need for renewable energy and applaud its use. However, we would like to note that monetary incentives have unleashed unbridled development of solar arrays in Vermont. Other towns such as Morgan and New Haven have had success with Public Service Board hearings.

We ask that our town officials request PSB involvement to combat the real consequences of e-waste as well as the endangerment to the very core of our state's economy. Tourism is our Number 1 industry in Vermont: Vermont is attractive to tourists and residents alike because it is free of visual clutter.

**From the Bethel Town Plan:** "It is Bethel's rural, natural and historic resources that are its greatest assets." Bethel cannot afford to lose more than it already has.

**From Act 248:** Requires energy developers to cause: "No undue adverse effect on aesthetics, historic sites, air and water purity, the natural environment, and public health and safety."

**Town of Bethel officials: Please add our town to the intervenors list for these projects.**

Signed,

Dave Eddy and Julie Nelson  
1564 Christian Hill Road, Bethel VT  
(802) 345-1554