



LHS Envirothon <lhsenvirothon@gmail.com>

Statement on the Tracer Lane Solar Project

3 messages

Lexington Envirothon <lhsenvirothon@gmail.com>
To: planning@lexingtonma.gov

Wed, May 17, 2023 at 6:08 AM

Hello,

My name is Caroline, and I am currently a sophomore at Lexington High School. I am writing to you today on behalf of the Lexington Envirothon team, an environmental science team that specializes in the study of natural resources and current environmental issues. This year, we are doing a research project on the impacts of climate change in our community. We understand that tonight, you will be discussing a proposal to implement solar panels around the Cambridge Reservoir Area, affecting a total lot area of around 1,306,800 square feet ([link](#)). However, after researching Lexington's open space, we believe that rushing into this action would cause more harm than good. Therefore, we would like to express our view that, should this project be set to proceed, strict conditions should be put in place to minimize the damage that it would cause to the nearby ecosystem.

While the benefits of solar panels are profound and numerous in regards to decreasing reliance on fossil fuel-based power sources, it is imperative that we consider the situation in which they are established. In this scenario, the amount of ecological services we lose due to deforestation reveals a major concern. We understand that the solar panels will be built near the Cambridge Reservoir, and that the construction of these solar panels would require the removal of around 800 mature trees ([link](#)). This is important to consider because the root structures of trees play a crucial role in holding soil in place—thus reducing erosion—as well as filtering out pollutants that would otherwise enter the waters of the reservoir. In the absence of these trees, the waters of the reservoirs could be at increased risk of both sedimentation and contamination from the surrounding residential areas.

Furthermore, there is a significant chance of a fire occurrence at the solar farm during the years of its operation. This not only poses a major safety hazard for communities within the range of toxic fumes, but also embodies serious environmental concerns—such a burn would vaporize a range of toxins from the panels, which could enter the Cambridge reservoir, thus contaminating drinking water for hundreds of thousands of nearby residents.

In the context of these contentions, we do understand that under the Dover Amendment, the Planning Committee has limited power regarding the discontinuation of this project. Assuming that the solar project does proceed, we understand that you will be working towards composing a list of conditions that will guide how it unfolds. In the face of the potential damage that may be inflicted by this project, we implore you to push for sizable stipulations that would minimize the harm inflicted on the ecosystem established in this area. One of these conditions could include requiring the implementation of best management practices such as filter strips and large forested buffers along the edge of the reservoir to prevent sedimentation of waterways. Another could be requiring replanting of trees. However, while replanting works towards the goal of replacing the carbon sink lost when a forest was cut down, the carbon sequestered in young trees simply cannot compare to the lifetime of sequestered carbon stored in large, mature trees. In addition, these young replanted forests cannot provide the ecosystem services that mature forests provide for both wildlife and

humans. This is not to say that replanting is not important, but that while it is a step in the right direction, it is not a definitive solution.

This debate must also be viewed in the context of this: Lexington has a massive inventory of alternative spaces to build solar panels. Why degrade valuable forested land when we can build solar elsewhere? Our unutilized space comes in two main forms: parking lots and roofs of buildings. Firstly, we have a surplus of large public parking lots onto which solar panels can be implemented, including the Lexington Public Parking Lot, Lexington Municipal Parking Lot, Lexington Shopping Center Parking Lot, Lexington Business District Parking Lot, and Lexington Residential Parking Lot ([link](#)). All of these represent unutilized, public spaces over which solar panels could be placed. In addition, solar panels could be established atop the many buildings located in Lexington Center and beyond (on this note; we are aware that there are some limitations placed on solar by the historical district regulations, but we believe that rooftop solar panels could be sufficiently discreet). By building solar panels on parking lots and roofs instead of on forested areas, we as a town receive the same environmental and economic benefits of solar, but with minimal degradation of our natural resources.

We are speaking up on behalf of Lexington's younger generation to tell you that we care about our forests, water resources, and wellbeing of all residents. This is the Lexington that our generation will inherit, so we sincerely ask that you listen to what we have to say. We hope this helps inform your decision tonight.

Thank you for your time,
Caroline Ehmann

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Co-Captain Jaime Yu (jaimelyu@gmail.com, 23stu249@lexingtonma.org)

Co-Captain Caroline Ehmann (caehmann@gmail.com, 25stu114@lexingtonma.org)

Kiruthika Ramakrishnan <kramakrishnan@lexingtonma.gov>

Wed, May 17, 2023 at 8:51 AM

To: Lexington Envirothon <lhsenvirothon@gmail.com>, Planning <Planning@lexingtonma.gov>

Hello Caroline,

We have received your email and will get it to the Planning Board members. The public hearing was continued to **Wednesday, May 17 at 6:00 pm on Zoom** where the Board will discuss further and begin their deliberations on the submitted application.

Zoom link: <https://us06web.zoom.us/j/85152984356>

Meeting Agenda Link: <https://lexington.novusagenda.com/agendapublic/MeetingView.aspx?MeetingID=912&MinutesMeetingID=-1&doctype=Agenda>

Thank you

Kiruthika Ramakrishnan

Planning Coordinator

Town of Lexington

1625 Massachusetts Avenue

Lexington, MA 02420

781-698-4565

From: Lexington Envirothon <lhsenvirothon@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, May 17, 2023 6:08 AM
To: Planning <Planning@lexingtonma.gov>
Subject: Statement on the Tracer Lane Solar Project

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Lexington Envirothon <lhsenvirothon@gmail.com>

Thu, May 18, 2023 at 11:45 AM

To: Tina McBride <1tinatmcbride@gmail.com>, Tina McBride <tina_mcbride2@hotmail.com>

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Lexington Envirothon** <lhsenvirothon@gmail.com>
Date: Wed, May 17, 2023 at 6:08 AM
Subject: Statement on the Tracer Lane Solar Project
To: <planning@lexingtonma.gov>

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