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Opposition to Motion to Reopen and Modify – Docket No. 492, Gravel Pit Solar, LLC

October 1, 2025

To the Honorable Members of the Connecticut Siting Council:

As the State Representative for East Windsor and surrounding communities, I respectfully submit this letter in opposition to the Motion to Reopen and Modify filed by Gravel Pit Solar, LLC under Docket No. 492.

The Council's decision approving the Gravel Pit Solar project in East Windsor was issued in March 2021, following a thorough review process that considered environmental, visual, and community impacts. Since then, the project has been constructed and has reached commercial operation. The developer now seeks to reopen the docket to modify aspects of the approved plans. There is broad and growing public opposition within the Town of East Windsor to any expansion of this project, reflecting years of frustration with over-siting, lack of accountability, and the cumulative impacts on our community.

While I appreciate the importance of renewable energy development in meeting Connecticut's climate goals, it is equally important to ensure that such projects are implemented responsibly, transparently, and in accordance with prior determinations made through the Council's established processes.

1. Undermining Finality and Public Trust

The Council's 2021 decision followed years of review and community participation. Local officials, landowners, and residents reasonably believed the matter to be settled. Reopening the docket years later, after construction and operation, creates uncertainty for municipalities, erodes public confidence in the process, and sets a concerning precedent.

Communities make planning and land-use decisions based on the finality of the Council's rulings. Allowing developers to revisit settled matters undermines trust and invites a cycle of ongoing modifications that blur the distinction between legitimate updates and de facto project expansions.

2. Nature and Scope of Proposed Modifications

Based on the applicant's filings, the proposed changes extend well beyond minor administrative adjustments. They include alterations to site layout, vegetation management, stormwater infrastructure, and potentially the visual and environmental footprint of the facility.

Such modifications warrant full evidentiary review and public notice, not summary approval under a limited reopening. The Council's modification procedures were never intended to accommodate redesigns that could alter previously evaluated environmental, hydrologic, or aesthetic impacts.

3. Cumulative and Ongoing Impacts in East Windsor

Beyond the procedural and technical concerns, East Windsor continues to bear the disproportionate burden of Connecticut's solar development. Our town hosts more utility-scale solar than any other municipality in the state, and the cumulative impact has been profound.

- **Lost Tax Revenue and Legal Burdens:** The conversion of viable development land to solar use has diminished our tax base while the town has expended significant resources in ongoing litigation with developers contesting their tax responsibilities. The developer associated with the Gravel Pit Solar project has also been significantly delinquent on tax payments to the town, further straining local finances.
- **Farmland Loss and Agricultural Harm:** Productive farmland has been displaced. Local farmers, many of whom lease land, have been forced to reduce herd sizes or cull livestock due to a shortage of proximal farmland. This directly undermines Connecticut's farmland preservation and local food security goals.
- **Barriers to Local Solar and Economic Development:** Large-scale solar projects have crowded out smaller, community-based opportunities, including rooftop and municipal solar that could directly serve residents and businesses.
- **Community Disruptions, Safety Issues, and Neglect:** Residents have endured construction nuisances, chronic noise, and even fires associated with existing facilities. Notably, a brush fire occurred on the Gravel Pit Solar site, which the developer attributed to landscaping equipment. Prior to that incident, the site's appearance and maintenance were significantly poor and the source of numerous public complaints. These issues reflect broader "siting and forgetting" practices that have left our town with little recourse when problems arise. Once projects are operational, developers have shown limited accountability or responsiveness, leaving local officials to manage lingering issues without adequate authority or support.

It should not be the responsibility of the Town of East Windsor to chase down well-resourced corporations to ensure payment of their tax obligations. The Siting Council would be setting the Town up for further economic strain if it were to approve yet another expansion by a developer with a demonstrated history of late or delinquent payments. This concern is magnified by the fact that many of these projects were approved prior to the implementation of the uniform capacity tax, leaving municipalities to navigate financial uncertainty and lost revenue in the interim.

This pattern of over-siting in East Windsor has reached a tipping point. Our community has done more than its fair share to advance the state's renewable energy goals, often at great local cost. It is inequitable and unsustainable to continue expanding this footprint without addressing the compounding harms.

4. Burden on the Public and Municipal Stakeholders

Reopening this docket forces East Windsor and its residents to once again devote time, expertise, and resources to a process they believed complete. This burden falls on municipal staff, prior intervenors, and residents, while the primary benefit accrues to the developer. East Windsor has already shouldered more of this burden than any community should be asked to bear. After years of accommodating large-scale solar development, engaging in repeated proceedings, and managing the residual impacts of multiple projects, our town deserves relief from further procedural and financial strain.

I also wish to note my concern that Connecticut Siting Council member Bill Syme was excluded from participation in today's proceedings. Although Mr. Syme is a constituent of East Windsor and a local farmer, he is also a duly appointed member of the Council, serving under appointment by the Speaker of the House. His exclusion from

participating in this matter is deeply troubling and inconsistent with the principles of fair representation and due process that should guide the Council's deliberations.

Moreover, the fact that a developer may seek the disqualification of a Council member when they anticipate that member might not support their position is further evidence of the disproportionate influence and unfair advantage developers are able to wield before the Council. Every duly appointed member deserves the opportunity to fully engage in the Council's work, particularly when matters of such significant local and statewide impact are under consideration.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge the Council to deny the Motion to Reopen and Modify in its current form. If the Council determines that limited updates are necessary, any reopening should be narrowly confined to discrete, technical corrections that do not expand the project's footprint or alter its environmental or visual impacts.

The people of East Windsor and surrounding communities have engaged in good faith throughout this process. They deserve the stability and certainty that come with finality – in this project and, quite frankly, in any further development of this kind in East Windsor and Ellington. Upholding that finality will preserve public trust in the Council's work and ensure that renewable energy development proceeds in a way that is both sustainable and accountable.

Thank you for your careful consideration and your continued commitment to fair and transparent decision-making.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jaime Foster". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Jaime Foster, Ph.D., R.D.
State Representative, 57th District