Please consider my comments in the attached document and in the body of this email.

Thank you

Dr. Eileen McGowan

Prof of Environmental Science

Chesterfield Planning Board

I want to comment on the recent initiative by the State of Massachusetts to permit the largescale installation of solar arrays in rural areas of the State without local oversight. My biggest concern is that they will be located on forested land or farmland. I live in Chesterfield and am a member of the Planning Board. The forest land that exists in the Hilltowns is an integral part of the health of the Pioneer Valley and the Connecticut river in that they benefit from carbon sequestration, clean water, and clean air coming from Chesterfield through the Westfield River’s watershed. Cutting down the forest to site solar installations will take away from the very thing we are trying to protect from climate change.

I am in no way against solar energy; I am a huge advocate as I’ve taught environmental science at the college level for many years. It just seems shortsighted for the State to take this stand when there are so many options for solar energy. For example, when I visit Umass, I see acres of parking lots exposed to the sun. These parking lots could be used for solar energy generation while providing shade for parked vehicles. There are also the parking lots outside of rest areas on freeways that should be covered by solar panels. If France can pass a law that all parking areas larger than a certain size must have solar panels covering them why can’t Massachusetts? I realize that it is easier for contractors to site solar installations on virgin land, but the State of Massachusetts should be thinking of the welfare of the citizens of the state, not the convenience of the contractors.

Another issue is the use of lithium batteries for storage. If something happens with the lithium batteries, that could pollute groundwater wells, not to mention causing forest fires.

Finally, the local communities that will have no say in this matter are the very communities that will bear the risk.

A transition to carbon-neutral energy in Massachusetts is essential. However, this transition must be thought out carefully, planned with minimum environmental impact in mind, and with the input of all parties, not just the State.