

May 29, 2020

Department of Energy Resources  
Attn: Kaitlin Kelly  
100 Cambridge Street, Suite 1020,  
Boston, MA 02114

**RE: Public Comment; Impact of SMART Emergency Regulations on Housing Assistance Corporation solar project in Sandwich, Massachusetts**

To Whom It May Concern:

As President and CEO of First Citizens' Federal Credit Union, and the Board Chair for Housing Assistance Corporation, I am writing to request that DOER amend the new Emergency regulations so that they do not block a solar project in an industrial area of Sandwich which has strong local support and years of development already invested. The Town and the region want this solar farm in Sandwich and Housing Assistance has made all the necessary investments and has demonstrated a deep commitment to environmental best practices. The two fixes proposed are:

- Amend the language of the emergency rulemaking to clarify that any new siting-related regulations are applicable only to projects qualifying for Capacity Block 9-16. This will eliminate the harmful impact on projects currently under development in the Eversource East territory that have been working under the understanding of the previous regulations.
- Expand the grandfathering exception under the new rules for projects that reasonably should have had their ISA's by the Emergency Regulations Publication Date, if the utilities had been processing applications in their regulated timeframes. This clause would be applicable to projects with interconnection applications prior to approximately October 15, 2019.

We are requesting these changes because the new Emergency regulations throw up obstacles in the final phases of the development of this solar farm, which has local support and has been on track to for approval under existing state and local regulations. We are already many years into a time and cost-intensive development process.

Work on this solar project began after consultation with town officials and regional legislators in 2018, after years of unsuccessful attempts to find a way to build housing on the property. The property is sandwiched between a residential zone and industrial zone, which makes a solar farm an ideal low-impact use of land rather than an industrial use, which would likely occur if HAC had to sell the property.

For the past two years, Housing Assistance has invested countless hours and tens of thousands of dollars on vetting the project's feasibility, selecting and negotiating with a solar developer, and building local support.. This sudden change in regulations at the very end of the approvals process will result in a significant financial loss to our organization. Not only a loss of the initial investment, but also the lost revenue from the solar farm operation, which would be extremely detrimental for our agency. This

revenue was to help with the long-term sustainable operation of our agency, whose critical housing services for low and moderate-income residents are needed now more than ever.

We do not request this reconsideration of environmental regulations lightly. Housing Assistance Corporation has a long history of appropriate housing development that meets the needs of the region and does not negatively impact the environment. In fact, our mission states, "Our mission is two-fold: to deliver housing and services that meet the needs of the local community and limit our impact on the natural resources; and to engage in responsible economic development that generates jobs, stabilizes housing, and strengthens the community."

In addition, we have been awarded a grant to work with the Association to Preserve Cape Cod to complete a land use that will identify areas that are conducive for smart, moderate density housing development and areas that are a priority for natural resource protection. This grant is but our latest collaboration in support of our shared interest in supporting our communities and protecting our environment. We know that the quality of our environment is central to the quality of life in our region. We have the commitment and expertise necessary to adhere to the highest best practices for construction that limits impact on natural areas.

In summary, I'd like to reiterate my request that DOER seriously consider revising the Emergency regulations so that the Sandwich solar farm project can move forward.

Sincerely,



Peter J. Muise  
CEO & President, First Citizens' Federal Credit Union  
Board Chair, Housing Assistance Corporation