

CLCPA Hearing 12 April 22

Comments from Jennifer B. Caci, co-founder of the Guilford Coalition of Non-Participating Residents (GCNR), Guilford, NY

Thank you for the opportunity to speak today. It is pertinent to my comments to quickly let you know my background. I am now a farmer but in 2020 I retired from the Army after 29 years as an Environmental Science Officer where I was charged with protecting the environments we operated in, both in the US and abroad, and protecting Soldiers from environmental threats. Sadly, I witnessed the unforeseen impacts of rushed decisions many, many times during my career and now I am commenting on a rushed decision by NY state. I have a Master of Science in Entomology and Applied Ecology and I am a life member of the Sierra Club. I try to be good steward of the earth in all that I do which is why I feel obligated to raise some important issues pertaining to New York's draft climate action plan. I live in Guilford, a community in Chenango County with an approved industrial wind turbine project so I am experiencing the state's green energy efforts in real time.

Comprehensively, it seems questionable whether or not the state really wants to build the most efficient wind and solar systems possible when the state itself is not identifying and selecting the locations most suitable for these projects, to include state owned land. Instead, the respective industries are selecting these locations and they do not appear to be selecting them based on how much energy will be produced. Rather, they are typically selecting low-income communities where the ability to counter an unwanted project is limited at best. As an example, please consider that despite page 84 of the 2016 Chenango County Comprehensive Plan stating, "Because of Chenango County's north to south facing hills which hamper the flow of wind, **the ability to locate large and in some cases small wind energy is prohibitive**", the High Bridge project is moving forward. Even the developer actually stated in their application that Guilford is a "**reduced wind resource**" so why was Guilford selected for this project? The answer is **because the per capita income in the town of Guilford is only \$27,892 per year meaning the community could not afford to legally challenge the project**. In fact, in 13 of the communities where wind projects either exist or are proposed, the per capita income falls between \$7,000 and \$18,000 BELOW the state's average per capita income of \$40,898. This begs the question, if this climate plan is designed to focus on the well-being of communities and implement so-called "climate justice" why are turbine projects established in and proposed for some of the poorest communities in the state even when the conditions are not ideally suited for them? During my research of the 50 wealthiest towns in upstate New York it does not appear that any of the state's proposed wind turbine projects are in the immediate vicinity of any of these communities regardless of the suitability of them.

So, it appears that the efficiency of these projects is questionable because of how the locations are being identified but there is still a belief by the state that these projects result in a windfall

for the communities based on personal contracts for residents, incentives for the town and county, and jobs. These are misconceptions. In Guilford, there are only 63 leases related to the project and of them only 31 are with permanent residents. In a population of about 2,000 people, the increased income for 31 families is hardly a windfall, and this situation is not unique to Guilford. Despite the approval of the High Bridge project, our property taxes INCREASED 9.7% this year. There is ample evidence that property values in communities with wind and solar projects decline. For many low-income families, their property is all they have, and without changes to the current siting methodology your plan negatively impacts its value. Additionally, decreased land value typically leads to a reduction in real property tax revenue and population decline in an already declining region. These factors combine to produce a decline in regional sales impacting existing local businesses and reducing sales tax revenue. Unless the siting process changes, the plan will not support underserved communities it will continue to harm them. There is another misguided belief that these projects will provide ample local employment opportunities. While there will be temporary blue-collar jobs related to construction, the long term positions are generally not blue collar and they are extremely limited in number. The High Bridge project of 23-25 turbines will create only 1 and ½ permanent positions with the ½ position being shared with the Bluestone project.

There is a good side and a bad side to everything to include green energy but currently there does not appear to be any collective oversight of the negative environmental impacts of these projects. As an example, if the proposed turbine and solar projects are all approved it will result in the loss of thousands of acres of farmland and millions of trees as well as destruction of landscape which supports endangered and threatened species. It seems counterintuitive that you are endorsing the removal of a permanent carbon sink in an effort to establish green energy.

In conclusion, since the climate situation is dire why isn't every available option on the table for consideration? Why are nuclear power plants being closed instead of looking at ways to ensure safety and manage the waste? The federal government is currently in support of the use of nuclear energy so why isn't New York? Last year New York used approximately 60% more fossil fuels after the closure of Indian Point than before it. Eliminating a type of energy which does not create carbon emissions seems counterintuitive. When it comes to land use, are you looking at state park land to site projects in addition to privately owned land? If not, why not? A significant limitation of the draft plan seems to be that it does not include the options for ALL types of available green energy and for that reason it is limited and should not be approved until the proposed options for green energy are all-inclusive.

Jennifer B. Caci



Guilford NY 13780