



Didi Barrett

Assemblymember 106th District
Columbia County
Dutchess County

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June 29, 2022

Doreen Harris, President and CEO
NYS Energy and Research Development Authority
17 Columbia Circle
Albany, NY 12203 – 6399

Basil Seggos, Commissioner
NYS Department of Environmental Conservation
17 Columbia Circle
Albany, NY 12203 – 6399

Dear Commissioner Seggos and President Harris,

I write to provide comments on the Climate Action Council's Draft Scoping Plan, primarily the provisions in Chapter 13 under the title, "E4. Support Clean Energy Siting and Community Acceptance". It is critical that the final Scoping Plan include greater consideration for and incorporation of the wants and needs of local communities, an expansion of the benefits a host community receives, and the development of a mapping tool to allow communities to identify appropriate land available to host renewable energy generation siting, and more easily communicate their interest to developers.

I was proud to vote for the Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act (CLCPA) in 2019, putting New York on the map as a leader in combating climate change while simultaneously committing to protect our local communities— both urban and rural. This legislation, by its name alone, trumpeted two priorities that have allowed NY to set and achieve ambitious goals while also balancing the negative and positive impacts – economic, environmental, and others – to communities across the state.

As we have already seen, some communities have welcomed large scale projects or have developers who work cooperatively with the community. In other communities, however, including the Town of Copake which I represent, it became evident that not all developers will meaningfully engage with their host community. As an Assemblymember with a sprawling, rural district with small farms, natural resources, rich history and beautiful viewsheds, it has become clear to me and my constituents that more attention must be given to input from the host communities throughout the renewable energy siting process.

The Plan itself states, “NYSERDA should make host community benefits more robust and targeted.” Indeed, host benefits should be expansive and, at a minimum, include access to low-cost renewable energy purchasing for the community, and a commitment from the developer to local hiring and purchasing. It should also include responsible sourcing of solar panels, full tax payments for the county, town and school district, and fair compensation to impacted homeowners. Above all, the locality should be tasked with the responsibility for the enforcement of the host community benefits to ensure local control and oversight.

The Plan’s “multi-pronged approach” to educate and work with communities to maximize the local benefits and minimize impact on lands identified by communities with farming and agricultural soils is vital. I am pleased that the Plan includes the development of a Clean Energy Development Mapping tool to help municipalities and local communities make informed land use decisions and communicate their wants and needs to interested developers.

We cannot combat climate change in an effective and robust manner without the support and full “buy-in” of our communities, and that requires the acknowledgment and the incorporation of their needs and wants, ensuring that their voices are heard throughout the renewable energy siting process, and maximizing the benefits to the communities hosting these facilities.

Thank you for your consideration of these issues. Please feel free to reach out with any questions.

Sincerely,

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

Didi Barrett
Member of Assembly, 106th District