

Trabulsi: Understand true impact of solar farms

Holly Kozelsky

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To the editor:

We were disappointed with the recent Henry County Board of Zoning Appeals (BZA) approval of Energix Sunny Rock Solar, LLC at the March 2 meeting.

Our February 2 letter to the BZA outlined our concerns about accusations made by county officials, about unsubstantiated claims made by the applicant, and about the nearly two tons of Cadmium content from 432,907 Cadmium Telluride (CdTe) solar panels from six Energix solar power plants that could leach into county soil and groundwater. I excerpt that portion of the letter here (bolded and italicized):

VCHR Response: Henry County and 432,907 CdTe Solar Panels

In light of these reports and because approximately 432,907 CdTe panels may be utilized in the seven Energix sites in Henry, county officials may want to rethink what is the best and highest potential use of these lands and whether Henry County is being targeted by Energix over its overly permissive regulatory environment.

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- Caden Energix Axton Solar—191,860 panels
- Sunny Rock Solar—94,116 panels
- Leatherwood Solar—58,140 panels
- Shifting Sands Solar—51,000 panels
- Firebird/Thunderbird—23,256 panels
- Green Acres—14,535 panels

The estimated Cadmium content contained in the First Solar panels proposed for Henry County at 4 grams per panel is nearly two tons. If Energix chooses to abandon its Henry County LLCs, the benchmark Department of Energy cost to properly dispose of that number of CdTe panels through encasement in concrete at a toxic waste burial site would be \$27.6 million.

We understand that the county will contract with Energix for a siting agreement. You may want to ask why Energix offered officials at Isle of Wight \$4.5 million for a 20MW solar plant (Prairie Solar) but only offered Henry County \$3.9 million for Sunny Rock, LLC, which is also 20 MW.

We forecast Energix will generate \$62 million in revenue over 35 years for this project—at the U.S. Energy Information Administration 2023 electricity price forecast. Why not write in an extra community quality-of-life charge of 10 percent of Energix's gross revenue in the siting agreement? Based on recent Energix statements and First Solar's support for treating CdTe panels as "landfill" waste, we believe the county's receipt of an extra \$6.2 million will help mitigate against the operator's intention to landfill the panels.

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