

Sayers, Margery

From: Carolyn Parsa <carolyn.parsa@mdsierra.org>
Sent: Monday, March 22, 2021 12:57 PM
To: Ball, Calvin; Rigby, Christiana; Yungmann, David; Jung, Deb; Walsh, Elizabeth; Jones, Opel; CouncilMail
Subject: Written Testimony for CB17-2021
Attachments: HoCo Sierra Club Testimony CB17-2021 3.22.2021.pdf

[Note: This email originated from outside of the organization. Please only click on links or attachments if you know the sender.]

County Council Members,

Please find the attached testimony from the Howard County Sierra Club in favor of CB17-2021.

Thank you.

--
Carolyn Parsa
Sierra Club Howard County Chair

March 22, 2021



RE: CB17-2021

POSITION: Support with Considerations for Amendments

Howard County Council Members:

The Sierra Club supports the expansion of solar installations and the recommendations of the Howard County Solar Task Force as written in their July 24, 2020 report:

- Updated definitions of solar installations
- Rooftop solar allowed in all zones
- Elimination of the glare study
- Adding preliminary and final review by the Agricultural Land Preservation Board (ALPB)
- Defining the size limit of ground mount commercial solar on Agricultural Land Preservation lots in a way that approximates the original law.

However, we have a few points to make with consideration for solar siting of commercial ground mount solar installations. While CB17 would not allow commercial ground mount in all zones, it does add it to certain zones in addition to what is currently allowed. Our concern would be how the siting is decided on the commercial ground mount installations.

The Task Force did thorough research into siting of commercial ground mount solar on farmland and their recommendations are thoughtful. Hopefully the added transparency included with the preliminary review by the Agricultural Land Preservation Board (ALPB) will help to address community concerns. Additionally, a lot of consideration was given to recommend the location of the solar panels as well as the ideas for combined use of solar panels and farming operations.

However, the Task Force does not make detailed recommendations on the siting of commercial ground mount solar other than for farms. They did mention support for

installations on brownfields, mine lands and landfill sites. These seem to be logical locations for ground mount solar. The siting of solar on forest, wetland or other natural areas is not addressed and we feel there need to be protections put into place to prevent developers from removing trees to install solar panels. If there are such protections already in place, then we don't need to be concerned about this issue, however, if not, we strongly suggest that this be addressed in the bill.

We would like to see special consideration for solar use in park land so that trees in these areas are not removed for solar panels, but if for accessory use, that rooftop, canopy over parking, or if ground mount, then a mandatory pollinator meadow be installed along with the solar panels.

Our other concern is the changing of zoning laws when we are in the process of updating the General Plan and then subsequently undergoing a complete zoning rewrite. We would like to know if this change to the zoning requirements would be reconsidered during the zoning re-write. And how would this bill affect park land, open space and green space also with consideration of the rewrite?

Generally we support the expansion of solar energy in Howard County as it is compatible with PlanHoward 2030 general plan which encourages the use of renewable & sustainable energy to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Additionally, as County Executive Dr. Calvin Ball set forth a series of commitments in February of 2019 along with signing onto to the "We Are Still In" declaration the County is committed to clean energy. We applaud this commitment to climate action and passing this bill would allow us to continue to act on these commitments.

We have less than a decade to make the changes we need to avoid the worst effects of climate change, therefore it is critical that we act to remove unnecessary hurdles to solar installations. At the same time, we must protect our forests and natural places. We look forward to any amendments that would help this bill achieve both goals.

Carolyn Parsa
Chair, Howard County Sierra Club

Sayers, Margery

From: Cathy Hudson <cmhudson@comcast.net>
Sent: Monday, March 22, 2021 9:59 AM
To: CouncilMail; Gowan, Amy; Feldmark, Joshua
Subject: follow up to the work session

[Note: This email originated from outside of the organization. Please only click on links or attachments if you know the sender.]

I appreciate being invited to the council's work session last week. What I was going to say as the time ended was that a lot of the task force and council's energy was being focused on how to create balance on ag preserved land. What I wanted to point out was that in order to lessen the pressure to place solar facilities on ag preserved land that other options needed to be opened up in the county. This bill begins to do that, but I think more needs to be done. (either with this bill or future bills)

For example, why limit commercial facilities to just industrial/business land in the east-they don't have students to fill the schools and they don't produce traffic for the roads. Why shouldn't larger landowners in the east be allowed to have an option other than developing their property? If land owners in the west can have solar facilities, why can't landowners in the east be allowed to. (and this includes faith based properties). Also, why are we requiring commercial solar facilities to go through the conditional use process on industrial sites in the east? I can't think of a nicer (quieter/cleaner) neighbor and we shouldn't put up this barrier.

Thank you,
Cathy Hudson

Sayers, Margery

From: Stu Kohn <stukohn@verizon.net>
Sent: Wednesday, March 17, 2021 3:07 PM
To: CouncilMail
Cc: stukohn@verizon.net
Subject: Proposed Amendments to CB17-2021
Attachments: HCCA - Testimony CB17-2021 Solar on Agricultural Preservation.docx

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Completed

[Note: This email originated from outside of the organization. Please only click on links or attachments if you know the sender.]

Dear Council Members,

I appreciate the invitation as a guest at today's Work Session regarding the discussion on CB17-2021. I would like to take this opportunity to emphasize the importance of our HCCA Testimony (see attachment) and that stated at the Work Session. It is extremely important for you to consider concentrating on the impact of the distance that Ground Mounts could be placed from a neighbors resident as I expressed at the Work Session today. Please refer to pages 90-93 and you don't see zoning districts such as R12, 20, R-A-15, R-SA-8, etc. stating the criteria even though Ground Mounts would be permitted if CB17 were passed. These residential zoning districts where Ground Mounts would be permitted are stated in the Bill on page 25, line 6; page 22, line 20; page 34, line 22; and page 30 line 8 respectively. There needs to be clarity in this area. Quite frankly they shouldn't be permitted in these zoning districts. However if you see fit to include then we would like to see an amendment which states the minimum distance from property lines which they can be located from adjacent properties.

In addition another amendment state there shall be no removal of trees on parkland (R20 or R-H-ED) for the purpose of erecting ground mounted solar collectors.

We want to reiterate our strong recommendation of an amendment which is imperative for all your constituents paying taxes. It should state that any property owner who has entered into a contract for an Agricultural Preservation Easement and applies for permission for a CSF within 30 days of final approval of an application for the CSF on the preserved land shall reimburse the County the amount paid to the property owner for the acreage of the preservation easement to be utilized by the CSF.

Thank you for your consideration.

Stu Kohn
HCCA President



HCCA

Howard County Citizens Association

Since 1961...

The Voice Of The People of Howard County

Date: 15 March 2021

Subject: CB17-2021 HCCA Testimony Regarding Solar

We, the Howard County Citizens Association, HCCA fully endorse the compelling testimony of both Ted Mariani, President of the Concerned Citizens of Western Howard and Dan O'Leary, Board Chairman of the Greater Highland Crossroads Association regarding CB17-2021.

On the Department of Planning and Zoning's website the policy of the Agricultural Land Preservation Program Howard County, Maryland Commercial Solar Facilities (CSF) clearly states, "The Agricultural Preservation Board will apply the following standards of review to the CSF Conditional Use Petition criteria in determining if the CSF is ancillary to the primary farming operation, the commercial solar operational area must be a maximum of 16 acres or 20% of the Property's size, whichever is less, and the petitioner must provide proof that the CSF use is ancillary to their farming operation." So the question becomes why the change to 34 percent?

Please refer to Page 4, lines 6 thru 11 relating to Ground Mounts. We would like to see an amendment which states the minimum distance such can be displayed from adjacent properties.

We strongly recommend a second amendment to this Bill which is imperative for all your constituents paying taxes. It should state that any property owner who has entered into a contract for an Agricultural Preservation Easement and applies for permission for a CSF within 30 days of final approval of an application for the CSF on the preserved land shall reimburse the County the amount paid to the property owner for the acreage of the preservation easement to be utilized by the CSF.

Theodore Roosevelt stated, "Here is your country. Cherish these natural wonders, cherish the natural resources, cherish the history and romance as a sacred heritage, for your children and your children's children. Do not let selfish men or greedy interests skin your country of its beauty, its riches or its romance." If you substitute the word "county" for "country" is this Howard County regarding solar on designated Agricultural Preservation property? Agricultural Preservation should really mean something to all. We should honor this program with pride.

Stu Kohn
HCCA President