



Planning Board

Regular Meeting

~ Minutes ~

347 Old Niskayuna Road
Latham, NY 12110

<https://www.colonie.org/>

Steven Heider

Tuesday, September 23, 2025

6:00 PM

Public Operations Center

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Steven Heider at 6:00pm. The roll was called.

Also present were Director Andris Blumbergs (PEDD), Planner Lauren Dryburgh (PEDD) and TDE Joe Grasso (CHA).

Attendee Name	Title	Status	Arrived
Steven Heider	Chairman	Present	
Henry J. Rosenzweig	Board Member	Present	
Paul A. Leo	Board Member	Present	
Michael J Malone	Board Member	Present	
Kevin M. Bronner	Board Member	Present	
Ricahrd Barlette	Board Member	Present	
Joanne Maloy	Board Member	Late	6:03 PM
Matthew Millea	Counsel	Present	

2. Public Hearing

2772 & 2792 Curry Road - Lisha Solar and Lisha 2 Solar: Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) Public Hearing is scheduled at 6:00 pm in the Public Operations Center, 347 Old Niskayuna Road, Latham NY 12110.

3. Report of the Planning Department

There was no report.

4. Regular Business

2772 & 2792 Curry Road - Lisha Solar and Lisha 2 Solar: Applicant: Eden Renewables. Represented by Environmental Design Partnership and Young/Sommer. Public Hearing for the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) regarding the proposed construction of solar arrays on two parcels totaling +/-75 acres. The site is zoned Single-Family Residential (SFR). TDE: CHA. (PL-22-00002 & PL-22-00003).

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arrays on two parcels totaling +/-75 acres. The site is zoned Single-Family Residential (SFR). TDE: CHA. (PL-22-00002 & PL-22-00003).

William Hurst of Young/Sommer presented the project on behalf of the applicant. Mr. Hurst highlighted four pieces of the DEIS, 1) The Albany Pine Bush/Karner blue butterfly habitat biodiversity restoration plan. Mr. Hurst stated that the goal of this plan is to enhance the site's conditions and improve the habitat of the Pine Bush for the Karner blue butterfly, as well as other native species. 2) The project is designed in accordance with NYS Department of Agriculture & Markets guidelines to ensure that nothing done during construction or operation will damage the site. This is to ensure that it will be suitable for agriculture use after the solar farm is decommissioned. 3) This project does not entail battery storage and the issues that lithium-ion batteries can pose to first responders and the environment. 4) The analysis of alternatives requires the applicant to explore alternatives that are less environmentally impactful. In this instance, the proposed project was shrunk from two solar arrays to one, which has the benefit of a smaller overall foot print.

Travis Mitchell of Environmental Design Partnership, LLC presented on behalf of the applicant.

Giovanni Maruca of applicant Eden Renewables spoke. Mr. Maruca highlighted the site's proximity to the Albany Pine Bush and the overall plan for habitat restoration. The project was designed with the intent to create space for blue lupine to take seed and spread within the solar farm. This will help to support the population of the Karner blue butterfly and other native species.

Planning Department Director Andris Blumbergs noted that the comments for this public hearing should be focused on the DEIS itself, not on the project directly. He explained that once all comments have been provided on the DEIS, the applicant will provide a FEIS and then go in front of the Zoning Board of Appeals for a use variance as a solar farm is not an allowed use in a Single-Family Residential zoning district. In order to go back in front of the Planning Board for concept plan acceptance, the applicant will need to obtain an approved Zoning Verification.

Mr. Blumbergs proceeded to read the attached letter from Mark Kazmierczak of 2764 Curry Road into the record.

Jim Quirk of 43 Sylvan Ave. spoke. He stated that he does not have enough familiarity with the DEIS to make comments at this time. Mr. Quirk yielded his time to other members of the public who wished to speak.

Deb Kazmierczak of 2764 Curry Road expressed her concern over the visual impact of the project and she provided photos showing the current conditions of the site and the surrounding area. Ms. Kazmierczak disagreed with the section of the DEIS that states dust and air quality issues from construction and fumes will be minimal. Ms. Kazmierczak stated she believes the impact from these factors will not be minimal. Ms. Kazmierczak quoted another section of the DEIS which discusses the environmental impact of the airfield, she stated it has not been used for six years. Ms. Kazmierczak stated she was concerned she may be able to see over the proposed berms. She also expressed concern over drainage on site, as she currently experiences drainage issues on her property. Lastly, Ms. Kazmierczak expressed her concern over the potential fire hazards even without battery storage proposed on this site. She proceeded to list other potential causes of fires.

Shawn Moran of 55 Hilliard Ln., a member of the Laborers' Local 190 Union spoke in support of the project as a union member, stating it will bring jobs and clean energy to the area.

Elaine Dreames of 4 Briarwood Terrace, a volunteer with Save the Pine Bush, yielded her time to speak to other members of the public.

Andy Arthur of 15A Elm Ave., a volunteer with Save the Pine Bush, spoke in opposition to the project. Mr. Arthur expressed concern over the proximity of the site to the Pine Bush and noted that solar farms can be sited elsewhere such as rooftops and brownfields. Mr. Arthur noted that the DEIS does not mention any comparisons to other power plants in the area, such as the Bethlehem Steam Station which produces more power. Mr. Arthur stated he believes the DEIS should consider more site alternatives.

Tom Ellis of 44 N Pine Ave., a volunteer with Save the Pine Bush, noted that the Pine Bush Preserve Commission recommended full protection for this site. Mr. Ellis spoke against habitat destruction and expressed that he feels this is the wrong location for the project.

Lynne Jackson of 223 Swan St., a volunteer with Save the Pine Bush, cited the Colonie Comprehensive plan which supported the updated 2017 Pine Bush Preserve Management Plan. As the plan recommends full protection for this parcel, Ms. Jackson expressed that she does not feel that the DEIS adequately addressed the Albany Pine Bush full protection plan. Ms. Jackson questioned who will manage the solar farm, as well as what will happen after the solar farm is decommissioned. She also expressed that she does not want it to go back to agriculture. Ms. Jackson stated that the DEIS does not adequately analyze potential options such as building the solar farm in parking lots or on rooftops. Lastly, Ms. Jackson asked when public comments are due to the Planning Department. Director Blumbergs stated there is not a set date, however he recommended any member of the public who wishes to submit written comments to the Planning Department do so in a timely manner.

Robin Gray of Guilderland, a volunteer with Save the Pine Bush, also cited the Colonie Comprehensive Plan, noting the full protection recommendation from the Albany Pine Bush Management Plan. Ms. Gray also suggested that Albany County Legislators or the Town of Colonie use available funds to purchase the land for the Pine Bush, so that it may be protected. Ms. Gray reiterated that the applicant should explore other locations for this project.

Gary Shoemaker of Albany, a volunteer with UAlbany Pine Bush Dinner and Events, spoke in opposition to the project in this location and suggested that solar arrays could be placed on rooftops or parking lots.

Russell Ziemba of 1813 Highland Ave., a volunteer with Save the Pine Bush, also spoke in opposition to the project in this location. He suggested solar arrays could be placed on rooftops or parking lots. He stated the alternative locations outlined in the DEIS are all undeveloped land and natural habitat. Mr. Ziemba suggested the former NL Industries site or other brownfields as suitable locations. Mr. Ziemba stated that this particular parcel meets all of the criteria the Pine Bush Preserve uses to identify critical habitat, and full protection would greatly benefit the surrounding ecosystem.

Chairman Heider mentioned that the former NL Industries site is already part of a major redevelopment project. Chairman Heider also stated that it is out of the purview of the Planning Board to require the applicant to put solar panels on rooftops or parking lots. Chairman Heider

stated that as far as municipal buildings, many older structures cannot support the additional weight that solar panels would add to a roof or that it is cost prohibitive to do so. Director Blumbergs noted the Town is exploring options to add solar panels over the parking lot of the public safety building, as well as newer buildings that can support the added weight to the roof.

Samantha Teague of 61 Gipp Rd. expressed concern over fire hazards, particularly the danger of fire spreading from the solar array to the Pine Bush and the surrounding area. Ms. Teague also questioned what the use of the parcel would be after the solar farm is decommissioned.

Helen Romano of 979 Kings Rd. discussed how she was part of an effort in the late 1990s/early 2000s to get the area surrounding the parcel rezoned to Single-Family Residential. She noted that the solar farm is not an allowed use according to Town of Colonie zoning law and expressed concern that making an exception on this project will set a precedent that may prove undesirable at a future date. Ms. Romano expressed further concern about the project location and stated that she is not in favor of more development in the area.

Neil Gifford of the Albany Pine Bush Preserve spoke. Mr. Gifford shared the Pine Bush's vision map for protection areas around the Preserve. The site is located on what the Pine Bush refers to as area 72b, which is recommended for Full Protection. This area is valued for its rare and endangered species, is fully restorable, and would help link and buffer the Preserve. Mr. Gifford acknowledged that the DEIS did successfully look to mitigate the project's effect on the surrounding area. However, Mr. Gifford noted that the DEIS did not fully evaluate possibilities for setting aside as much of the land as possible to dedicate to the preserve for protection. The revised site plan shows a piece of land set aside on the west side of the parcel, if this was flipped to east side, this would help there be contiguous land set aside for the Pine Bush which would benefit conservation efforts.

Director Blumbergs provided additional remarks. It was stated in the DEIS that previously at other locations, the applicant had worked with local fire services to have an emergency plan in place should a fire occur. Director Blumbergs cited the Schodack facility fire in October 2024 as an example of a fire that took place at an Eden Renewables solar facility. Director Blumbergs asked the applicant if there will be a plan in place with local fire services to fight a potential fire, and what would be done after the fire is extinguished to mitigate the environmental impact of burned solar panels.

Giovanni Marcuso of Eden Renewables responded to these comments. Mr. Marcuso stated that the Department of Environmental Conservation could not determine the source of the fire, and that the fire was mostly limited to "ankle height" off the ground which caused limited damage to the facility. Mr. Marcuso expressed that the fire was not caused by the solar farm, and none of the solar panels were set on fire. Mr. Marcuso emphasized that the panels that were knocked down were caused by a windstorm in an unrelated event.

Director Blumbergs stated that in the DEIS, the battery portion of the proposal has been removed. However, Director Blumbergs also noted that Eden Renewables reached out to a neighboring property on August 20th, 2025 asking about installing a battery storage facility there. Director Blumbergs stated that battery storage is also not an allowed use and that the applicant would need to work with Fire Services regarding fire safety concerns. Additionally, he noted that as part of SEQR, the project cannot be segmented. Director Blumbergs also stated that the site is within the Town's Conservation Development Overlay and that this has not been addressed within the DEIS. This would affect how much land would be required to be conserved

should the land be developed as a residential subdivision. Also, the Planning Department has not received any information about a Host Community Benefit Agreement despite it being mentioned multiple times in the DEIS. Additionally, the applicant will need to include the FAA as an Involved Agency. While the FAA was identified in the DEIS, there has been no correspondence provided.

A letter from Lynne Bruning was provided to the Board regarding effects on property values. Director Blumbergs explained this cannot be included as part of DEIS review because there is no environmental impact. Director Blumbergs stated Ms. Bruning should bring these concerns to the Zoning Board of Appeals when the applicant seeks a use variance.

The public comment period was left open so more comments can be received.

5. Adjournment

With no further business before the Board, the meeting was adjourned at 7:11pm.