

Dear New York State Legislature,

Please accept my comment for the Local Government portion of the New York State Joint Legislative Budget Hearing, specifically on the Real Property Tax Law 487 and Section 575-b.

Requiring local assessors to use the new appraisal model with a discounted cash flow approach and discount rates to value solar and wind energy systems, puts already cash strapped towns hosting these projects in a terrible financial position and does not serve the interests of local municipalities and their residents.

As a former town board member, and a current planning board member in Meredith NY, where a 145MW, 1100 acre solar facility has been proposed, the cumulative impacts of such a project are starting to come to light.

Not only will large swaths of soul nourishing nature -the main reason most people live here, be destroyed when forests sequestering carbon are cut down, and the landscape turns from lush green to man-made black and grey, but agricultural land will be permanently stripped of it's ability to grow non-GMO crops as the soil is degraded and compacted causing life sustaining micro-organisms to die.

And this coming on the heels of studies by Cornell and the American Farmland Trust pointing to upstate NY becoming a sweet spot for farming as climate change makes former agricultural areas un-farmable.

Host towns are losing a great deal, and the new appraisal model will eliminate the ability for towns to make themselves whole.

This combined with the 94-c process overriding local laws, including strategies like allowing developers to site enormous solar facilities 250' from homes, make me think that parts of the Climate Act as well as parts of the budget were put together by people who were somehow harmed by Upstate New York when they were children. That is how destructive these policies are to rural upstate towns the State is purportedly trying to help.

Yes, we are in a climate crisis, but destroying functioning natural systems and then, to add insult to injury, not permitting towns a pathway to be properly compensated for their losses, is wrong. Towns must be allowed to tax industrial renewable energy facility at a fair and not discounted rate.

Thank you for your time and dedication.

Rachel Polens

Meredith, NY