
OAK BLUFFS WATER DISTRICT

POST OFFICE BOX 1297, OAK BLUFFS, MASSACHUSETTS 02557
TELEPHONE: (508) 693-5527 • FAX (508) 693-7014

September 1, 2016

Jim Vercruysse, Chair
Martha's Vineyard Commission
The Stone Building
33 New York Avenue
Oak Bluffs, MA 02557

Re: Oak Bluffs Water District Solar Project

Dear Jim,

I am writing on behalf of the Oak Bluffs Water Commissioners regarding the proposed solar project at 4 Alwardt Way in Oak Bluffs. Over the past eight months, in coordination with DEP the solar project has drastically reduced in size. I believe that the current project design addresses all concerns, including ground water protection and visual screening, and therefore there is no reason it should not be approved by the Martha's Vineyard Commission. The goal of this project is to help cover the Water District's ordinary operating costs, and thereby reduce the burden on our rate-payers. The Water District uses a substantial amount electricity to run the pumps in our wells and power our administrative buildings. This project would help us reduce electricity costs significantly over the next 20+ years. Cost savings allows the Water District to help try to keep water rates low and to invest in infrastructure to better serve the residents of Oak Bluffs with clean, safe, and reliable water supply.

The 45-acre parcel that now houses three of our wells is perfectly suited to develop a solar PV project given its nearly perfectly flat topography and south-face orientation. This is the only site available to the District for a solar project. Utilizing this parcel for this purpose allows an unusable parcel to be functional beyond its primary purpose as a well field.

In addition to the economic savings the solar project has environmental benefits including the **equivalent amount of carbon sequestered by 1,142 acres of U.S. forests** in one year through avoided emissions (based on the Environmental Protection Agency Greenhouse Gas Equivalency Calculator for the total expected output of the 1.46 MW solar project). This project will only require the clearing of approximately 10 acres, which is far less. Solar PV projects also create numerous other benefits to the grid and the utility (benefitting all electricity ratepayers) including reduced line losses, fuel price hedging, avoided transmission and distribution capacity needs, additional reliability, and resilience.

As you will recall, the Water District's involved bid process allowed us to award the contract to the state's premiere solar developer, based in large part to their commitment to working with the town and residents in the vicinity of the project, as well as the very attractive reduced electricity rate they quoted. A series of meetings have been held with all Oak Bluffs boards and

committees with a permit granting role in this project, as well as the Board of Selectmen to ensure we are all on the same page.

There have been some concerns over the protection of the drinking water supply, which the Water District takes very seriously as steward of the land. The Oak Bluffs Water District Commissioners and the professional licensed Water Operators are obligated to ensure safe potable drinking water by protecting our well fields and our infrastructure. They would never have allowed any kind of threat to our most precious well sites. This being said, ultimately the Department of Environmental Protection ("DEP") has the final say on any modifications to the land as the wells cause the land to be protected under Zone I and II designations. DEP has thoroughly reviewed the solar project and determined that it will have no adverse effects on the drinking water, and therefore approved the project. Any concerns over the protection of the ground water have been nullified.

It is our feeling that the benefits of this project, to both the residents of Oak Bluffs and the island, far outweigh any potential detriments. The Water District would respectfully ask that the Commission approve this project so it can move forward to the next step in local permitting.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Kevin Johnson". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, prominent initial "K".

Kevin Johnson, Superintendent

CC: OB Water Commissioners
OB Board of Selectmen