Solar farm plan violates town plan in many ways

To the editor:

According to last week’s Sakonnet Times article, the utility-scale solar facility proposal for Wingover Farm is the first to get to the master plan stage at the Tiverton Planning Board. While the planning board is addressing concerns about responsible solar siting, they do not want to protect Wingover Farm with upcoming amendments or moratoriums.

The Tiverton Solar Ordinance was written by a solar company with a stake in its outcome. If rezoning for the benefit one party to the detriment of another isn’t enough to raise concern, let’s revisit the Tiverton Comprehensive Plan.

“Goal: Preserve and protect the natural features and unique cultural qualities that contribute to the special character, identity, heritage and environmental quality of Tiverton.” Open space: “Encourage and assist owners of farmland in acquiring funding to preserve land that would remain in agricultural use, to include the acquisition of agricultural easements, and in promoting use of the Farm, Forest, and Open Space Program that provides tax relief to landowners who wish to keep their open land undeveloped.”

How is wiping out a historic farmhouse, prime farmland and special forest for a massive solar plant consistent with the comprehensive plan? The solar ordinance doesn’t even promote this sort of siting: “The applicant shall utilize existing cleared land or that which minimizes the impact of forest and habitat.” “The facility shall be designed to be compatible with continued agricultural use of the land wherever possible.”

Unlike a farms that use solar to supplement their income while continuing to be farmers, this facility will not combine agriculture in its design. The proposal for a utility-grade solar power plant on Wingover Farm violates so many of the town’s visions and there is no plan in place for the many problems that will result from this development. I still find it hard to believe that this proposal was ever taken seriously.

The community has put their trust in the fact that their comprehensive plan would serve as a moral compass for future plans, and protect their residents and the towns ecosystem and rural character. At this time we have a Solar Ordinance that can not be reconciled with the Tiverton Comprehensive Plan. Proposals like the solar power plant for Wingover Farm have brought this to light. This is a taking from the community.

Pristine, 18th century farms with deep history, prime farmland, old growth forests and waterways are the sheer definition of the goals described in Tiverton’s Comprehensive Plan. These goals and policies should have been well protected by any zoning or planning ordinances implemented by town officials.

Wingover Farm may be the oldest farm in Tiverton with its original farmhouse. If the Wingover proposal solar goes through, it will be a black eye for the Town of Tiverton. What else are we in for if this can happen to a farm like Wingover Farm? You can learn more about what will be lost on Wingover Farm’s website: www.wingoverfarm.com

Julie Munafò
Jamestown

Use casino money wisely — approve charter change

To the editor:

I would like to address the issue of how Tiverton will use the $3 million from the casino revenue. As a member of the Casino Subcommitteee, I heard much discussion on how the town could best use this money. The town administrator of Lincoln visited twice to share that town’s experience with Twin River revenue. Financial experts advised us to use the money to reduce debt when no penalty is incurred, to add to the pension fund and to supplement the cash reserve. Also to identify critical capital projects such as drainage and infrastructure improvements, and to start a Capital Improvements Fund so we don’t have to borrow as much money.

All of these items will lower our taxes. We were warned not to use it for the operating budget because if a fire, hurricane or other disaster closed the casino, revenue would end and taxpayers would have to make up the difference.

With a roughly $50 million casino budget, our $3 million from the casino revenue needs to be used wisely. Vote to approve the Charter Amendment.

Carolyn Wieman
Tiverton

POLITICAL STATEMENTS

Lebeau — Bike path will bring crime to Tiverton

Good morning Tiverton —

People are taking my signs off private property. The stealing of my signs shows the integrity of those who are against me. When you read articles in the newspaper (letters to the editor) that say I’m against a bike path that will lead right to a housing project in Fall River easily opening up our quiet little town to crime, then, yes I’m 100% against it! Not because it’s in my neighborhood, but because it’s bad for Tiverton as a whole.

If we were situated between Middletown and Portsmouth, it would be a different story with a different outcome. Unfortunately, we border a large city with its violent crime on the rise. As a councillor this is one of the many issues that come before us. We need to keep Tiverton and its residents in mind and not our self interests. I will vote in the best interest of my constituents, as I have done over the past two years.

Randy Lebeau
Candidate for Tiverton Town Council

Who am I, what am I about?

This is a question I have been stopped and asked about a lot since I put my name on the ballot for town council Tiverton. I tell them integrity and common sense are something that is currently lacking in town government. I’m William McLaughlin - they call me Billy Mac, a 62 year-old Army veteran, a local business owner married to my wife Deborah for 43 years. Life member of the Star Rider motorcycle club who do a lot of charity work in Tiverton. Why am I running and what can I do for Tiverton and its residents? I’m running because of all the unethical, shortsighted and even unlawful practices that have become standard operating procedures by those who have left us in the dark that are purging our citizens. With high taxes, the expense of needless lawsuits, excess operating costs and more.

And because I like many of my fellow citizens have been the victim of actions by the corrupt boards and town council’s actions. Who tend to act and rule on behalf of their friends and small interest groups. When no citizen or group should have any more influence than another. If a new law, regulation, or motion does not benefit the town and the majority of its taxpayers, it’s not going to happen. You have to say anything about it. And you can’t fix it from the outside. You have to dive into the swamp to make change. Listen to what the people want. And weight it in a fair and impartial manner.

The unethical, one-sided and sometimes unlawful actions wrongfully taken by various boards should be exposed and those members removed. Now I have no illusion that I can fix everything wrong with this town government but I can work to make it transparent enough to prevent the immoral minority from doing business as usual. Former council member Joe Souza was right in his letter to the editor about nobody wants to challenge them because of fear of retribution. I have been approached by and spoke to 9 former council and board members who all told me of abuses by those in charge and they feared exposing it. So they left not to be part of it. Hence, we lost honest, decent people for these positions.

I have no fear of what the immoral minority could do that I have not already experienced from them. I don’t want to say that all members of these boards are bad, they aren’t. Just spineless out of fear to do the right thing when those in charge lead them to do wrong. I feel it is time to start fresh by voting out all those in elected positions that have been there for more than two terms.

If the voters of Tiverton will do their part, I will do mine in fixing this mess called Tiverton government. Remember, your vote and every vote counts. So get off your asses and vote or stop bitching about what’s wrong with this town like high taxes, poor property climate, bad roads, minimal town services - this is your fault if you don’t vote! ‘It’s your fault if you vote for the same old people who put us in this situation and expect a different outcome!’ Stand up and take back your town, find out about the new people running and what they stand for. Make your choices and vote in them and together we can make real change the better.

Thank you,
William McLaughlin

Paid for by William McLaughlin

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