

**WILTON ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS**  
**THURSDAY March 27, 2025**

A meeting of the Wilton Zoning Board of Appeals was held on Thursday, March 27, 2025, at Wilton Town Hall and was called to order by Vice Chairman Ramsdill.

**PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

**PRESENT:** Vice Chairman Christopher Ramsdill, Nicholas Collins, Scott Kingsley, and Scott Dussault, 2<sup>nd</sup> Alternate. Also present were Mark Schachner, Town of Wilton Zoning Board of Appeals Attorney, and Lisa Closson, Zoning Clerk.

**ABSENT:** Chairman O'Brien, Scott Duffy, Chris Iwinski, Jay Rifenburg, and Andrew Bobbitt, 1<sup>st</sup> Alternate.

**MINUTES:** The minutes of the last meeting, held on February 27, 2025, were approved, as submitted, on a motion made by Mr. Kingsley, seconded by Mr. Dussault. All board members present were in favor. The motion passed.

**CORRESPONDENCE:** None other than what is presented before the board.

**EXTENSIONS:** \*SPECIAL USE PERMIT EXTENSIONS ARE NOT SUBJECT TO A PUBLIC HEARING\*

None

**OLD BUSINESS:**

**Appeal No. 2024-06** Quaker Springs PV I, LLC, 200 Portland Street, 5<sup>th</sup> Floor, Boston, Massachusetts, 02114. Request for a Use Variance pursuant to Schedule B, R-2 District of the Zoning Ordinance; properties located on Jones Road and Perry Road, Saratoga Springs, New York, 12866, Tax Map Nos. 140.-2-6.12 and 140.-2-55, zoned R-2, in the Town of Wilton.

**\*The public hearing has been left open from the March 28, 2024, ZBA meeting.**

Kyle Murphy with Quaker Springs, Lucas Faria with Galehead Development, and Alecia Legland, Attorney with Hodgson Russ, representing Galehead Development, were present.

Mr. Ramsdill and Mr. Kingsley discussed the concern of train vibration and impact on the panels with Mr. Faria from the last meeting. Mr. Faria explained structural drawings will be prepared by engineers prior to construction...

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Mr. Ramsdill opened public comment 7:11 p.m.

Ed. Kokoski, 7 Knollwood Drive, is concerned about the impact on the electrical system from the train vibrations. He then shared the following comments:

1. No justification for the project. NYS goals for solar power is 10,000 mw. This project is 5 mw. Benefit to New York State is inconsequential.
2. Consequential harm: Home values will be reduced, quality of life will be harmed, neighborhood children and grandchildren will be playing 150 ft. away from the project.
3. A fire would drive toxic smoke into their homes and would have to evacuate.
4. Viewshed from Knollwood Drive, Jones Road, and Northway will be ruined. Saratoga County has already brought that up as objection.
5. Karner Blue habitat.
6. Solar power plants could give out electromagnetic radiation and high-tension power cables with people living next to them is a big concern.

Mr. Kokoski handed the Board his list of concerns for record.

Bob Marchillo, 39 Knollwood Drive, is concerned about devaluation of homes.

Mike Bryce, 233 Loudon Road, stated the applicant should have submitted drawings from engineers before the Board has a chance to vote on anything, it should have been done last year. If they are a reputable company, they would know the snow loads. His opinion is they (the applicant) do not want to spend the money on engineers to go forward until they have a shot of getting a yes vote.

Deb Kokoski, 7 Knollwood Drive, said they have sat here now two to three years. She shared the following concerns:

1. They (the applicant) bought the property already without having the variance.
2. NYS is a big state. It is not true that they can only plug in there (parcels on application).
3. Knollwood should not have the community disrupted any more than it has been.

She read comments from Jean Marie Breen explaining they are NYS taxpayers. Why should a solar power company from MA be allowed to profit at their expense.

Augustus Wykoff, 10 Knollwood Drive, shared this is the most disturbing thing to have listened to for two and a half years. He shared the following concerns:

1. If site is selected through software program, he can't imagine a reasonable businessperson selecting this property, which has a federal highway, active railroad, and residential homes all bordering it.
2. When the applicant applied, they submitted substantially completed drawings and forms, and the timing of the initial submission was between the holidays and February, needing to notify neighbors with hopes that they (neighbors) would be in Florida.

Joe Cigan, 5 Knollwood Drive, questioned noise coming from the panels and noise barriers.

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Mr. Bryce mentioned the solar array should be considered a subdivision because there is already a subdivision there.

Mr. Ramsdill closed public comment at 7:35 p.m. The public hearing remains open.

Mr. Faria addressed some concerns raised:

1. Vibrations to electrical systems- they (the applicant) have a remote monitoring system which monitors every piece of equipment on the site.
2. Overarching goals for the State-this project makes up part to the 10,000-mw goal.
3. Benefit-Purely financial and generate property tax revenue.

Mr. Ramsdill asked, with the concept of children potentially climbing the fence, which was a concern, what type of fencing is going to be used, and Mr. Faria said 7' high chain-link fence with signage. Discussion continued regarding fencing.

The Board then proceeded with the State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQRA) process, a required environmental assessment that evaluates potential adverse environmental impacts before granting approvals.

Mark Schachner, legal counsel for the Board, explained the SEQRA process in detail. SEQRA is a state law requiring government agencies, such as the Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA), to consider environmental impacts when making decisions on land use projects. The board must determine whether the project could result in significant adverse environmental effects.

The SEQRA review consists of three key parts:

1. Part One: Project Description – The applicant had already submitted a detailed Environmental Assessment Form (EAF), outlining the project scope, location, and potential environmental impacts. This document served as the foundation for the board's review.
2. Part Two: Impact Analysis – The Board conducted a step-by-step evaluation of 18 environmental impact categories, determining whether each had no or small impact, or moderate-to-large impact. These categories included:
  - o Land alterations (excavation, deforestation, soil disturbance)
  - o Water table depth and groundwater impact
  - o Stormwater runoff and erosion
  - o Air quality and emissions
  - o Noise levels from the solar panels and transformers
  - o Traffic increases during construction
  - o Wildlife habitat disruption
  - o Aesthetic and visual impact on the community

As the Board reviewed each category, questions arose about the accuracy and completeness of the developer's Environmental Assessment Form (EAF).

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Members pointed out missing details related to operational noise, removal of natural noise barriers, stormwater drainage, and potential groundwater contamination.

Several members expressed concerns over the deforestation required for the solar panels, as well as the risk of flooding and soil erosion. The project site was noted to contain pitch pine trees, a known habitat for the Karner blue butterfly, which raised concerns about compliance with environmental conservation laws.

Regarding fire hazards, the board discussed how solar panels can generate electrical fires and how firefighting efforts might be complicated due to high-voltage cables that cannot be easily deactivated.

The question of fencing and child safety was also raised. The applicant confirmed that the site would be enclosed with a seven-foot chain-link fence, but some board members remained concerned that children in the nearby residential area could attempt to climb over it.

3. Part Three: Determination of Environmental Significance – If the Board identified any moderate-to-large environmental impacts, they (impacts) would be further analyzed in EAF Part III to decide their importance, and only then determine whether there would be any potentially significant adverse environmental impacts therefore requiring preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement.

As the review progressed, Board members found that several impact areas needed further investigation before making a determination. These included:

- Stormwater runoff and erosion control measures
- Potential groundwater contamination from solar panel materials
- Impact on local wildlife and protected species
- Fire safety concerns
- Noise levels from the operation of the solar panels

The Board found 24 potential moderate to large impacts. Because these issues required additional study and clarification, the board did not reach a final determination on the project's environmental significance. The SEQRA process remains ongoing, with the board expected to revisit its findings at a future meeting after receiving more detailed environmental assessments from the applicant.

**NEW BUSINESS:**

None

**Adjournment:**

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Mr. Collins made a motion to adjourn. Mr. Dussault seconded the motion. All Board members present were in favor. The meeting was adjourned at 8:46 p.m.

**Dated: March 28, 2025**

**BOARD OF APPEALS**

**BY** \_\_\_\_\_

**Lisa Closson, Zoning Clerk**

**BY** \_\_\_\_\_

**Christopher Ramsdill, Vice Chairman**