



Advisory Neighborhood Commission 5C01
P.O. Box 92352
Washington, DC 20018

May 16, 2019

Board of Zoning Adjustment
441 4th Street, NW, Suite 220S
Washington, DC 20001

Re: BZA Case No. 19927- 2800 Otis Street, NE

On December 8, 2018, a 5C01 Single Member District (SMD) meeting convened to gain knowledge of the Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Washington, DC's solar array project. Including the Catholic Charities representatives, thirty (30) people attended the meeting. On January 5, 2019, a second SMD meeting was held with Catholic Charities representatives and the community with forty-six (46) people in attendance. We learned the following:

Concerning Catholic Charities:

- Ø It is a non-profit entity of the Catholic Church
- Ø 2800 Otis Street, NE has 14 acres of land space
- Ø The majority of the site is open space

Concerning the solar array project:

- Ø There will be 4,788 solar panels creating the solar array
- Ø The panels will be located close to the Randolph Street side (north side) of the property
- Ø The setback from public space is at least 8 feet and closer to 25 feet
- Ø The mounted height of the panels would be about 7', which later changed to 12'. Currently the proposed height is 10.9'

- Ø The array would be screened by a six feet tall inner perimeter security fence
- Ø Trees will be located on the outside of that fence to block any glare from the panels
- Ø There will be an outer perimeter fence (two stages of chain-link fencing)
- Ø It will take about two months (weather permitting) to excavate and install the array
- Ø There will be no major drilling
- Ø Wires will be underground and connected to the Pepco source
- Ø Power would be provided to 12 Catholic Charities properties in D.C.
- Ø The site of Catholic Charities is zoned R-1-B (Residential). They are requesting a Special Exception to the zoning regulations to use the property for utility purposes also.

SMD 5C01- Community's Major Concerns:

Electrical Sensitivity:

It was determined that there is no study proving that solar power has any effect on pacemakers, non-cable TV service, cell phones, and the general health of the public. It is not high density voltage.

Catholic Charities presented a study that assessed the electromagnetic field levels associated with this particular project. It found that the magnetic field levels around the solar array would be low; however, the report noted, *"No guarantee or warranty as to future life or performance of any reviewed condition is expressed or implied."*

Noise:

There might be a hum, but no louder than a Pepco transformer or two people talking in close proximity to each other. There will be daytime construction noise

Storm Water Runoff:

Catholic Charities claims to have filed storm water management plans with DOEE. To date, ANC 5C cannot locate those plans.

Decreased Property Values:

It was determined that there is no study proving the depreciation of property as a result of solar power

How will the community benefit in supporting this project:

Reportedly, the financial affects of the solar array will not be realized for a year. Catholic Charities is willing to donate any electrical overage to the Solar For All Program with a request that the credits be applied to the residents of SMD 5C01.

Maintaining the Property:

Currently, the perimeter of the property and public space adjacent to the property has not been kept up. There is an overgrowth of weeds and grass, and missing sections of fence. Months after the initial SMD meeting during which Catholic Charities was made aware of their neighbors' annoyance of the unkempt property, Catholic Charities has not cleaned up the site. The community cannot trust they would do so after the solar panels are installed.

How will the array be screened:

According to Catholic Charities, 87 trees, with a height of six feet, will be planted around the perimeter to shield the array. This is not sufficient screening in that the array would be 10.9' high.

Solar heat island effect:

Catholic Charities reported that the solar panels do not generate heat; however, studies have shown that the array could create a solar heat island affect. The array coupled with the removal of shade trees, would increase the outdoor ambient temperature to properties closest to the array.

On May 15, 2019, ANC voted to oppose this project (0-5-1) for the following reasons:

- Ø The solar panels would provide power to 12 Catholic Charities properties across the city, with no benefit to the immediate community and no guarantee of a benefit. These neighbors would have to endure the negative presence of a solar array, such as the solar heat island effect, possible glare, and, clearly, an unsightly view, and in at least one case, an obstructed sightline.
- Ø To some neighbors, the array will border their backyards or side yards. For at least two neighbors, the array will border both, the back and side yards on Randolph and Perry Streets.

- Ø Homes and a church above or near the solar array will have to pay the higher cost of cooling their properties during the summer days due to the solar heat island effect. Temperatures within 100 feet of solar arrays or solar farms are several degrees warmer than other areas according to Phys.org and Columbia University's Center for Life Cycle (clca.columbia.edu)
- Ø The 10.9' height of the panels would be visible from the street and surrounding residences.
- Ø The trees Catholic Charities intend to plant on the outer perimeter of the array would not screen the array until about five years from now, according to the landscaper provided by Catholic Charities. The trees would be evergreens, which are notorious for pest infestations, such as mosquitoes and spiders.
- Ø The panels can cause the death and injury to wildlife, such as birds, who mistake the reflective panels as water. According to U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services (FWS.gov), certain solar power services produce beams of sunlight intense enough to injure or kill birds and bats.
- Ø It appears Catholic Charities and Pepco could include the neighbors into the array; thereby, reducing energy costs to the residents of the 5C01 community now and not a year from now. This is based on internet research of other communities in the USA and their relationship with solar farms and local power providers.
- Ø Bringing Pepco into this matter to address the community's concern has been fruitless. I have reached out to Pepco via its Community Liaison, Mr. Jamaal Johnson. Reportedly, he has tried to secure a representative of Pepco's Green Power Connection, the solar power experts as he describes them, to meet with us and address our concerns regarding this project. They have cancelled, according to Mr. Johnson, three times at the last minute. Attempts to reach Pepco's Green Power Connection for input into this matter will continue as of the writing of this statement.

In conclusion, ANC 5C does not support this project.

Sincerely,



Gail A. Brevard
Commissioner
ANC 5C01