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Shepherd's Run solar farm project kicked back by state

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ALBANY — New York's Office of Renewable Energy Siting has kicked back Hecate Energy LLC's application to build a 42-megawatt solar farm in Copake as incomplete.

The state's response followed a 60-day review of the application and criticism from state and local leaders, who filed letters with the renewable energy office and Gov. Kathy Hochul.

Shepherd's Run, the name of the project proposed by the Chicago-based developer of solar, wind and energy storage projects, has been a flashpoint for the rural hamlet's residents since it initially was discussed in 2017. Then, it was planned as a 60-megawatt solar farm to be located near the intersection of Routes 23 and 7.

But when Hecate lost control of a parcel of land that was part of the proposal, the Town of Copake asked the state to dismiss the application, a motion which was granted in February 2024. Following the dismissal, the company responded with intent to refile a revised plan, reducing the scope of the project.

Hecate's Matt Levine, senior director of development, commented on Monday, Feb. 24, with the following statement: "Hecate is committed to working with state and local stakeholders to build a project that helps New York meet its clean energy goals while preserving and protecting the natural



PHOTO BY JOHN COSTON

Residents learn about the Shepherd's Run project at an open house on April 3, 2024, in Hillsdale.

beauty of Columbia County.

"This is a routine and anticipated step that happens with many, if not most permit applications. We are reviewing the notice from ORES and will work to update the application to address any outstanding issues. We expect to submit our response shortly."

In the days before the latest ORES decision, which was published on Friday, Feb. 21, State Sen. Michelle Hinchey, D-41, who chairs the Agriculture Committee, and State Assemblymember Didi Barrett, D-106, who chairs the Energy Committee, weighed in with concerns. Mayor Kamal Johnson of Hudson also wrote about that city's questions regarding the sit-

ing of Shepherd's Run on the watershed of the Taghkanic Creek, which supplies 100% of Hudson's water supply.

Citizen groups have both supported and opposed Shepherd's Run, and Hecate has held one in-person open house for residents and a second virtual open house to answer questions.

The state cited numerous, specific deficiencies in the application across several categories, including:

- Requiring design drawing consistency;
- Providing information related to public health, safety and security;
- Revision of the Visual Impact

Assessment;

—Requiring revision of the summary of probable impact on archaeological/cultural resources;

The ORES Notice of Incomplete Application identified specific deficiencies which require a response relating to the following: terrestrial ecology, water resources and aquatic ecology, wetland, agricultural resources, effect on transportation, socioeconomic effects, environmental justice, electric system effects and interconnection, electric and magnetic fields and site restoration and decommissioning.

In all, ORES listed 60 area of incompleteness and descriptions of specific deficiencies.