

# The MILLERTON NEWS

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## Hecate refiles application for 42-megawatt solar project

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COPAKE — Hecate Energy LLC has filed responses to questions from New York’s Office of Renewable Energy Siting, which earlier this year kicked back the company’s application for a 42-megawatt solar farm as incomplete.

The project has been a topic for townspeople for years, having been first 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 after Hecate lost control of 60 acres that were included in the project, the town sought a dismissal of the application, a motion that was granted in February 2024.

Hecate’s response then was to downscale the project at the same location and refile. On Dec. 23, 2024, it filed but its application was then rebuffed as incomplete with a long list of requested answers. Hecate’s latest filing on May 20 is a response to that ‘incomplete’ decision.

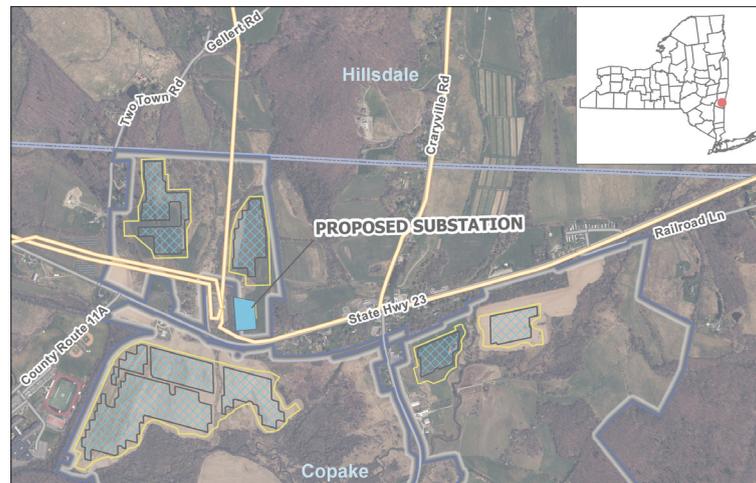
The project has drawn criticism and some support from citizen groups, and state legislators have questioned it.

Days before the state’s decision, in February, 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 siting of Shepherd’s Run on the watershed of the Taghkanic Creek, which supplies 100% of Hudson’s water supply.

Matt Levine, project manager, said, “After reviewing the notice from ORES from earlier this year, we worked to complete the application.

“As we move forward through the permit review process, we are committed to working with Copake, its residents and ORES to build a project that can help New York State meet its clean energy goals while supporting the economy and preserving the rural character of this special community.

“Shepherd’s Run has already been greatly improved by incorporating feedback from commu-



MAP COURTESY OF HECATE ENERGY LLC

Map showing the proposed solar array locations of the Shepherd’s Run solar project.

nity members along the way, and we look forward to our continued working relationship in the future.”

Hecate’s latest filing, which amounts to more than 80 separate documents, is a response to the state’s detailed list of requests related to the project, which comprises approximately 723 acres.

The state requested additional information related to drawings depicting the extent of tree clearing, fencing and landscaping improvements. More information was requested about public health, safety and security, and about the visual impact of the project, including visual resources that would be affected and visibility from viewpoints. State regulators included requests for information about solar-glare as well as a lighting plan, and a survey of groundwater wells within 1000 feet of the site.

The state’s list of requests was extensive, and also covered categories such as terrestrial and aquatic ecology, wetlands, agricultural resources, transportation and socioeconomic impacts, as well as electric system effects and information about site restoration and decommissioning.

Town of Copake Supervisor Richard Wolf said the town attorney would review the latest filing and that would include an engineer assessment of the company’s responses.

Sensible Solar for Rural New York a citizen’s group, issued a statement: “There’s no good news in Hecate’s filing. There is still no evacuation plan for the Taconic Hills Schools is there’s a fire, and

no commitment to meet NY State’s raw water standard to protect Hudson’s drinking water. In fact, we learned about more negative impacts of this ill-conceived project, such as: project construction will generate 1,500 tons of landfill waste,

the new access road to several inverters does indeed go right across a protected waterway in violation of DEC regulations, solar panels are in fact planned for floodplain areas, and Hecate has refused to provide additional landscaping in certain areas, as requested by ORES. The more details we learn about Shepherd’s Run, the stronger we feel that this project is wrong for Copake.”

Friends of Columbia Solar, a citizen group that supports Shepherd’s Run, responded to the new filing with this statement: “We’re pleased that Hecate has hung in there with this project. We hope that ORES will find the application complete and move this project forward to the hearing stage, where we’ll welcome the opportunity to put facts in support of Shepherd’s Run before the public. We remain committed to focusing on the facts and the benefits this solar farm will bring to the community.

### *Hecate’s list of changes*

Below is a list of what Hecate said last week are major changes in response to community feedback.

- Reduced the fenced area to approximately 175 acres
- Added approximately 11 acres of shrub and tree plantings and revised landscaping to further minimize visual disturbances
- Added an Agrivoltaics Integration Plan that provides for sheep grazing in two of the array areas covering 73 acres
- Removed battery storage from the project scope
- Added extensive native tree and shrub planting to minimize sightlines for neighbors
- Support to extend/connect to local hiking trails or other passive recreational/educational opportunities
- Conducting local fire departments and first responder training
- Including pollinator species seed mix within the landscaping plan
- Implementing a Net Conservation Benefit Plan for grassland birds to preserve more than 25 acres of additional habitat
- Incorporating wildlife-friendly rural style fencing instead of chain-link fencing
- Avoiding direct impacts to all state regulated Class I wetlands and developing a project with no net loss of wetlands
- Committing to not source solar panels from suppliers who utilize forced labor or that contain the environmental contaminant PFAS (per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances)
- Providing bidding opportunities to local suppliers and using local labor and purchasing when practicable
- Changing the location of a proposed access road.