

**From:** [Kali Whatley](#)  
**To:** [Amanda F. Butler](#)  
**Subject:** Solar Panel Project Opposition Letter  
**Date:** Monday, August 16, 2021 9:05:28 AM

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Updated 8/16/21

To the members of the planning and zoning committee,

I am writing you to express my strong concern and opposition to EX-0721-0118, Sweet Lake Land and Oil, Inc. request for an exception to allow industrial development (solar project) in the 5400 Block of Highway 14 East in Ward Two.

While I understand that our community is growing and changing, and that is simply a part of life, I do believe rezoning from agricultural/residential land to industrial will be quite detrimental to those of us who have chosen to build our homes in this area. It is no surprise that many of those living in proximity to this area intentionally purchased land outside city limits as we were hoping to escape the hustle and bustle of the city. My husband and I recently purchased acreage to build a home and move our four children to a more country setting. We have dreams and plans of them having livestock and participating in 4-H programs, spending more time outside in the fields rather than on a couch with an iPad. We even did our homework making sure the land we bought was zoned for us to be able to do these things. Now we are hearing about a large solar panel project that will literally be at our back door. I have many questions and concerns with this that I would like to bring to your attention.

- Solar panels often contain lead, cadmium, crystalline silicon, and other toxic chemicals that are considered hazardous. Some experts report that these chemicals can contaminate the land by simple rainwater runoff, as well as from natural disasters like hurricanes, tornadoes, and hail storms- all of which we have had in the last year. It is also reported that disposal of damaged panels needs to be done in an appropriate manner. I am uncertain if southwest Louisiana experiences another natural disaster would the appropriate disposal of damaged panels be readily available to prevent exposure of the hazardous material, especially with our recent experience of debris removal still ongoing from Hurricane Laura a year after it occurred.
- Rezoning land to industrial, or making an exception, will undoubtedly affect the value of surrounding land and homes. The size and scope of what is being proposed will inevitably be a determining factor when someone is trying to buy or sale a home or land in the area. If this was a 34-acre solar farm proposal instead of a 3400-acre, I think it would be tolerated better. I also truly feel like this is opening a can of worms to other large scale industrial projects.
- Wildlife and vegetation will be impacted to an unknown degree. Experts have reported how previous solar farms have caused more bird deaths than initially expected and for unknown reasons. Some of the

effects of these farms may not be known for years down the road. A solar farm in southwestern US is trying to mitigate losses to an endangered species there. They still don't know if the farm will have a negative impact on this species or not. Although I'm not a biologist, I do have concerns how this would affect the grazing pasture of the cattle on our land.

- The energy produced by the solar farm may not be specifically used in our community. There is a report about a community in Virginia that has not seen any significant benefit to their energy costs even though it allowed a local solar farm to be located in its vicinity.
- Having read the question-and-answer PDF from the zoning meeting agenda, the company gives answers to some of these concerns. However, most of their references are dated 10-20 years ago. There are many reports about possible concerns that are more up to date than that. They also use regulations that are specific to the state of Massachusetts, not Louisiana. These differences may lead to potential problems such improper removal of decommissioned materials.

I'd like to add I did attend the meeting last week where a representative essentially answered questions regarding the project. I did not leave feeling any better about it. In fact, many times he said there would be changes to his proposal, regarding height of the panels and wind rating. Who's to say other changes won't also happen? That doesn't seem fair to those of us that have to live next to this project. Due to these concerns and the general unknown impact a solar plant of this size will have on our community, I think it would be advantageous to not grant this zoning exception. I believe they should find land already zoned for their needs, just like I did, or at the very least not place a massive project like this in an area surrounded by homes and livestock.

Thank you for your consideration regarding this matter,

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