

July 1, 2024

Letter to the Maryland Public Service Commission

Re: Proposed solar photovoltaic generating facility by Chaberton Solar (Case No. 9726)

To the Commission:

The League of Women Voters of Montgomery County (LWVMC) thanks the Public Service Commission for the chance to comment on the proposed solar photovoltaic generating facility, to be built in the Montgomery County Agricultural Reserve. This land is a major environmental, economic, cultural, and historical resource. LWVMC has studied the Reserve since its establishment, and we still follow its sustainability efforts and commercial activity. Prime agricultural soil in the Reserve should be set aside for agriculture. And while we support solar energy production as an accessory use to agriculture in the Reserve, we do so for limited amounts which are proportional to onsite use of electrical power.

We strongly urge the Commission to deny the Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity for this project. At 4.0 MW, Chaberton Solar Sugarloaf I, LLC's proposed facility is twice the limit set by Montgomery County for community solar projects permitted in the Reserve, and we believe the state should defer to well thought out county law when evaluating community solar projects. LWVMC has participated in several discussions regarding solar installation in the Reserve and fully supports the guidelines set forth in the zoning code of Montgomery County. Three years ago the Montgomery County Council [increased the limit](#) on community solar devices in the Reserve to a maximum of 2.0 MW—and this was already a major increase!

Reducing carbon emissions and transitioning from fossil fuels to renewable energy sources is necessary for the environmental sustainability of our world. LWVMC has a strong history of supporting measures to make our community greener and preserve natural resources. We understand it will take creative solutions to meet the state's clean energy goals. But if approved, **this project will sacrifice irreplaceable agricultural land, set a precedent that undermines local government authority, and open the door for future developments** that reduce the Reserve's benefit to the county, state, and country.

Once again, we appreciate the Commission listening to organizations and individuals on matters that directly affect their communities. Through the cooperation of residents and responsible leaders we can preserve Maryland's most vulnerable resources for the future.

Susan Albertine
President,
League of Women Voters of Montgomery County