



Buncombe County Board of Commissioners

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Attn: Kim Campbell, Chief Clerk
North Carolina Utilities Commission
4325 Mail Service Center
Raleigh, North Carolina 27699-4325
Docket E-2 Sub 1257

November 10, 2020

Dear Ms. Campbell,

On behalf of the Buncombe County Commission, I would like to submit additional comments about the proposed 5 MW solar farm on the retired Buncombe County landfill in the Town of Woodfin. I appreciate the chance to share our perspective on some of the issues that have arisen about this project and the overall 15 MW of solar planned for in the WNC Modernization Project.

The WNC Modernization Project included the construction of a large new gas generating plant and associated infrastructure in Buncombe County. The project was controversial in the region as many organizations and residents preferred investments in clean energy infrastructure, including energy efficiency and renewable energy, rather than hundreds of millions for construction of a large new fossil fuel generation facility. One element that made this overall modernization project more acceptable in the region was the commitment to include 15 MW of new solar generation.

We do not think it is appropriate or realistic to view the 15 MW of solar through the same lens as every other utility-scale solar project across the state. None of the other projects being developed by Duke or any private solar companies were committed to by the NC Utility Commission or the utility as part of a complex, broad agreement for future energy generation in a specific region that involved numerous trade-offs by all parties.

Buncombe County would not expect the Commission to approve cost-recovery on just any project simply because it helps a local government meet its renewable energy or climate protection goals. But we do hope the Commission will not deny a project that was committed to by the Commission and Duke Energy. Buncombe County and many organizations in the community have been working hard on this project for several years. We are hoping this project can move forward so Buncombe County can begin planning and implementing other elements of our regional clean energy strategy. Disapproval of this project would be a major step backwards for our efforts.



We have reviewed the concerns raised by the public staff and are willing to help address them. As outlined in the recent comments by Larry Watson, Buncombe County is willing to essentially waive the lease payments for the retired landfill site to address the concerns expressed by the Public Staff. Generating additional revenue has never been the motivating factor for the Buncombe County Commission. With this concession on our part (which will need to be formally adopted by the County Commission at a later date), there will not be any other site in the region with a lower cost to lease.

Thank you very much for your consideration of these comments and for your service.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Brownie Newman".

Brownie Newman,
Buncombe County Commission