



# The Chairman's Corner

by

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## **DENY SHEPHERD'S RUN PERMIT**

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Recently, as the New York State Office of Renewable Energy Siting and Electric Transmission (ORES) was conducting public hearings on the proposed Shepherd's Run Solar Project in Craryville, Stuyvesant Town Supervisor and Columbia County Board of Supervisors Majority Leader Ron Knott and I were on hand to offer our comments.

Here, I'd like to offer the gist of comments we made, as well as other observations.

This proposed project is utterly confounding to the Columbia County Board of Supervisors and myself. How New York State can virtually ignore its own law when it comes to the possible permitting of this solar project is indeed a mystery.

I'm referring to the principle of Home Rule. Under the heading "Local Government Home Rule Power" on the state's official website, this statement immediately follows: The constitutional and statutory foundation for local government in New York State provides that counties, cities, towns and villages are "general purpose" units of local government. They are granted broad home rule powers to regulate the quality of life in communities and to provide direct services to the people.... The home rule powers available to New York local governments are among the most far-reaching in the nation. The extent of these powers makes the local government a full partner with the state in the shared responsibility for providing services to the people.

In the state of New York's own words: In this country's federal system, consisting of the national, state and local governments, local government is the point of delivery for many governmental services and is the level of government most accessible to and familiar with residents. It is often referred to as the grass-roots level of government.

The proposed Shepherd's Run project is wholly inconsistent with local laws and remains opposed by local governments around Columbia County. This is a perfect example of the state ignoring the rights of small, rural communities.

In two separate instances, in 2021 and 2023, the Columbia County Board of Supervisors has opposed the development of the Shepherd's Run solar facility by Hecate Energy on predominantly agricultural land east of the Taconic Hills School District and north of Copake Lake in the Town of Copake.

"We are a community based in large part on agriculture and open spaces," notes Stuyvesant Town Supervisor and county Majority Leader Ron Knott. "Our local government leaders work diligently developing comprehensive plans, and local zoning regulations to protect our natural resources. In the Town of Stuyvesant, like Copake and many other Columbia County communities, local zoning regulations have been developed that allow for sensible solar development while preserving enough acreage that we all still can have food."

The deadline for ORES to issue or deny a final permit for the project is September 15, 2026.

There's no better time for New York State to stand behind its words than right now and deny the Shepherd's Run permit.