

**Statement submitted by Carol Swanson  
Cranston City Planning Commission  
March 20, 2023**

Chairman Smith and esteemed members of the Planning Commission:

My name is Carol Swanson, 593 Natick Avenue. As a direct abutter, I would like to submit the following statement and three supporting documents as part of the public record for the continued discussion surrounding the Natick Avenue Solar Project on March 20, 2023.

The first issue I'd like to bring up is the real estate values of the surrounding homes.

In 2019, the abutters submitted a list of requests to address prior to approving the solar development plans. One of them was that an escrow account be set up to cover losses in real estate market value due to the solar installation.

Revity's/Southern Sky's counsel responded in writing:

“The suggested escrow account is an extreme suggestion not based in any reality... There is not empirical data that shows any causal effect on the value of the property and the location of a nearby solar field.”

That was true then. It is not today.

In 2020, a URI study (submitted with this statement) found that homes within a mile of a project such as this (developed farm or forest land) lost 5% of value, on average. Homes within 1/10<sup>th</sup> of a mile lost 7%, on average. On a home worth \$400,000, which is a conservative estimate in today's marketplace, that's a loss of \$20,000 to \$28,000.

In a previous testimony, the applicant invited a real estate market representative to counter the results of the URI study. The representative quickly and succinctly stated his opinion that this development would not affect homeowner values. Notably, he presented no empirical evidence to support that opinion. If a similar witness appears during this round of discussions, I would implore the Commission to require an independent, empirical analysis to support such claims before drawing any final conclusions on this matter.

This issue of reduced home values does not just affect the homeowners, but the city revenues for both Cranston *and* West Warwick, as drops in home values will result in a drop in real estate tax revenues, particularly when you consider how many homes are located within a one-mile radius of the development.

An argument has been made that the tax revenues generated by the solar development project will outweigh any losses incurred by lower taxes paid by homeowners. But according to a 2022 Boston Globe article (submitted with this statement), that may no longer be the case, as a

Rhode Island law has since been passed ensuring that the tax characteristics of these properties will remain as they were before the lease was signed.

Is the Commission sure that the city will benefit as much as has been promised and not end up in the same situation as Hopkinton (see article), regretting a decision to permit such a project?

The second issue I'd like to speak to is one that I believe has been lost among all the legal arguments and is a personal one to my family. It's the tragedy that this project represents to the ecosystem of our neighborhood, particularly for a large herd of deer that we have witnessed for many, many years. We have seen generations of moms raise and protect their babies, and, less frequently, the bucks that have fathered them. Early this past Christmas Eve morning, my husband and I videotaped a six-pointed buck grazing just outside our window, with the Christmas tree in the foreground. It was a magical moment, one of the reasons we feel so fortunate to live where we do.

But it's not just the deer -- we have also seen turkeys, fox, rabbits, hawks, and even on two occasions, a bobcat. It breaks my heart to think about the destruction this solar project will bring for these animals.

Commissioners, if you truly care about Cranston and West Warwick homeowners, tax revenues, and the environment in our beautiful city, you will reconsider the approval of this development and the future of this property.