

STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA

BEFORE THE COUNTY  
COMMISSIONERS AND  
THE PLANNING BOARD

COUNTY OF CATAWBA

IN RE:           Strata Solar- Solar Farm Use  
                  Catawba County Parcel ID: A portion of 3638 14 31192  
                  Address: 2819 Sigmon Dairy Road, Newton, North Carolina 28658

**STATEMENT OF JUSTIFICATION IN SUPPORT OF THE  
REZONING PETITION**

NOW COMES THE PETITIONER, by and through counsel of record, and respectfully requests approval of their application for to rezone the subject property from R-30 to R-80 CD, with a zoning condition limiting the use to a solar farm. In support of this request, Petitioner provides the following information:

**I. Introduction**

Strata Solar proposes to construct a solar farm on approximately 28.225 acres of the 158± acre tract. The property is on Sigmon Dairy Road near its intersection with Rome Jones Road. The property is currently zoned R-30. Adjacent properties are developed as homes and farms. Adjacent properties are zoned R-30.

The solar farm will contain rows of Photovoltaic (PV) cells mounted on posts set in the ground by hand. The posts are set individually in effort to minimize the amount of grading on site. These rows of PV cells are referred to as "solar arrays." The solar arrays will be fixed in place facing south in order to receive the maximum amount of solar energy. This configuration contains no moving parts. The power generated from the solar farm will be sold to the power company for use by Catawba County and consumers in place of power produced by non-sustainable means.

Solar energy is a public necessity. Demand for electricity has increased exponentially in recent years and our society is dependent upon conventional sources of power such as coal, gas, nuclear and hydro energy. Conventional sources of electricity are expensive, finite resources that require significant environmental disruption and public safety risk to maintain or extract. Solar energy is a clean, cheap, unlimited resource with little environmental impact. The demand for power will not decline. We must embrace renewable means of power generation.

## **II. Statement in Support of Application**

The proposed zoning is consistent with the Catawba County Strategic Growth Plan. The proposed solar farm is consistent with the residential and agricultural land use pattern that exists in the area today. The site of the proposed solar farm is somewhat isolated from adjacent properties. It is separated from Sigmon Dairy Road by property owned by the same property owner. In addition, a farm pond and associated wetlands on the site will be protected.

The proposed rezoning is reasonable and in the public interest. Solar farms allow property owners to maintain large lots while generating income for themselves and the County, which will be spent locally. Solar farms preserve rural character. The proposed solar farm will consume practically no county services: no seats in county schools or on school buses, virtually no refuse or recycling needs, no special sheriff protection, no light pollution, no emissions of any kind, no demand for water from depleted aquifers, and no sewage disposal.

Access to the site will be from a NCDOT-approved driveway with 24' access gate onto Sigmon Dairy Road. The site will generate virtually no traffic after construction. The solar facility will not be staffed daily. Employees are expected to visit the property weekly or less frequently to check and maintain the equipment, mow the grass and make repairs. The active area of the solar farm will be enclosed by a six foot (6') high fence and gated for security purposes. Access codes to the gate will be provided to local emergency service providers. Vehicular access to the site is adequate for the use proposed and for emergency services. There will be no buildings or employees on the property so there is no need for sewage disposal facilities or water on the site.

The proposed solar farm will protect against soil erosion and sedimentation. Care is taken to minimize grading on the site by hand setting poles to support the solar cells. The areas beneath the solar panels will be planted with grass or alfalfa to stabilize the site. During construction, erosion control measures will be maintained in accordance with the County regulations and the site will comply with County stormwater regulations. All environmental buffers will be maintained and respected.

Solar farms are virtually silent. The solar arrays proposed have no moving parts. The only sound is the quiet hum of electrical transformers, invertors and substation that deliver the solar power to the power grid. Similar facilities are located in neighborhoods to deliver power to homes. At night, when the sun is not available, there is no energy being created and no noise on the site. Solar farms generate far fewer vehicle trips than one average single-family home. Employees visit the site once a week or even less frequently. Solar panels are designed to absorb light, rather than reflect it.

The proposed solar farm will comply with all of the requirements of the newly adopted Catawba County Unified Development Ordinance and is consistent with the rural land use pattern in the area today. We respectfully request approval of the proposed zoning.