

Good morning Third District Legislators,

During Friday morning's Chamber session, I sensed a degree of hostility with respect to solar energy centers. Yes, I completely understand the inherently beneficial designation by the State legislature. I also understand no one is trying to prevent farmers from farming or selling the land. **What I do understand is this:** once farmers sell their land or enter into a long-term lease, they are no longer farmers in the traditional sense. The use of land has drastically been altered with solar energy center construction. My concern is the lack of attention provided to deeming set-backs, landscaping, environmental impact, watershed drainage, reclamation bonds, performance bonds, land preservation, community well-being, accessibility for fire apparatus, fencing, and etc.

Several municipalities in neighboring counties have passed ordinances providing guidelines to solar energy center construction and one might say the trend has begun. My concern is the lack of revenue stream returning to the township, offsetting in some instances \$5m construction improvements. Yes, the panels can be dismantled 30 years from now; however, with a stream of energy sales taking place only benefiting the solar utility, no inherently beneficial offset will be received for municipal budgets.

Assemblyman Burzichelli is absolutely right with saying we get a warm and fuzzy feeling with solar energy; **and yes**, Senator Sweeney, energy and communication technology will change. Compared to 30 years ago, our technology continually evolves and municipalities need help with setting ordinances in place addressing this type of evolution.

I enjoy and appreciate our farmers; this is the reason I live in Salem County. Salem County is my home and my property taxes are increasing not decreasing. Solar energy installations for school districts and municipal use are getting set aside due to solar energy utilities snatching up the accessibility opening to the primary utility. After the Chamber's session Friday, a public relations manager from Atlantic City Electric stopped to talk with me. He said he gets what I was saying and asking.

**Question posed at Friday's gathering:** Are there any guidelines under consideration at the legislative level addressing solar energy centers as ratable construction?

**Question for today:** Will someone at least evaluate the impact of solar energy centers at the municipal level that would include schools, municipal buildings, county buildings, and disgruntled solar center neighbors?

We look to our legislative representatives to help preserve farm land - especially top-grade farm soil, while being fair and supportive of farmers and municipal governments.

God bless you,

**Margaret E Maxwell-Mood, Ed.D.**