

COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION
AND INFRASTRUCTURE

COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION
AND THE WORKFORCE

COMMITTEE ON SCIENCE,
SPACE, AND TECHNOLOGY

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-3222

October 1, 2024

The Honorable Kathy Hochul
Governor
State of New York
NYS State Capitol Building
Albany, NY 12224

The Honorable Jessica Waldorf
Interim Executive Director
Office of Renewable Energy Siting
Empire State Plaza Agency Building 3
Albany, NY 12210

Dear Governor Hochul and Ms. Waldorf,

We are writing to urge your respective offices to take action to support the right of local communities to stop a disruptive and invasive wind farm development project in our districts. The proposed Palmer Capital-Maple Harvest Industrial Turbines Project in southern Onondaga County is widely opposed in the area due to its impact on the local environment, including its threat to induce landslides, damage water quality, and disrupt scenery. Local citizens have a right to regulate land-use in their towns, and the New York state government should not trample on their legitimate concerns.

Palmer Capital Corporation, a venture capital firm based in Massachusetts, recently purchased 6,600 acres of land in southern Onondaga County near the towns of Tully, Otisco, LaFayette, and the Onondaga Nation, with the purpose of developing a wind energy facility containing approximately 20-25 industrial-scale wind turbines.¹ This large-scale project is set to significantly disturb the surrounding environment of the Tully Valley, with turbines reaching heights of 600 ft. and above.

One of the leading concerns about this project is its potentially catastrophic impact on the local geology of the area. The area at the heart of the planned wind farm has a recent history of landslides and has been studied by the United States Geological Service (USGS) as a geologically hazardous area.² Palmer's plan to install 2,000 ton turbines on Bare Mountain in particular, which suffered a major landslide in 1993, threatens the slope's stability and the security of nearby homes. Negative geological activity could be accelerated further by changes in stormwater runoff from the installation of turbines. Disturbing the ground and increasing

¹ <https://www.mapleharvestwind.com/faqs-2>

² <https://pubs.usgs.gov/of/2014/1076/>

precipitation runoff could accelerate unwanted geological instability, threatening homeowners in the region.

The Maple Harvest project would also threaten the water quality of the region. Palmer Capital's land is located near the headwaters of Onondaga Creek, which is part of the broader Onondaga Lake watershed that has historically suffered from pollution and poor water quality. The increased surface water runoff caused by the installation of the windmills, requiring new roadways, transmission lines, and other facilities, could contaminate the watershed with debris and soil particulates.

Lastly, the Maple Harvest project would substantially disrupt the landscape of the scenic Tully Valley, negatively impacting homeowners and communities in the area. The sheer scale of each turbine would disrupt the otherwise picturesque rural landscape of the region. With this disruption could come decreases in surrounding home values. A study from Berkeley Lab found that homes within 1 mile of a recently announced wind project saw up to 11% immediate declines in value.³ This disruption threatens the livelihoods of local residents, while changing the character of surrounding towns by altering the scenic landscape.

Local towns of Otisco, Tully, and LaFayette, deeply concerned about how this project would negatively impact the local environment, have petitioned to stop the Palmer Capital-Maple Harvest development from dramatically harming their community. However, under the Accelerated Renewable Energy Growth and Community Benefit Act, New York's Office of Renewable Energy Siting (ORES) is not required to abide by local regulations or input when licensing a project. This has left local communities helpless in standing up for their region's character and safety.

We deeply oppose the development of this wind farm. Local towns have a basic right to determine the character of their communities. The advancement of this project would disregard this right and could manifest many negative consequences on the local environment. Moreover, we believe your respective offices must take action to ensure that this project does not move forward. In particular, we are calling on ORES to listen to and consider the concerns of local citizens in evaluating Palmer Capital's project. A sober analysis of the drawbacks of this project for local communities would reveal that this project clearly can't move forward.

Thank you for your attention to this matter, and we look forward to working with your respective offices to ensure that local communities and the environment in Central New York are protected.

³ <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0301421523004226?via%3Dihub>

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Brandon Williams".

Brandon Williams
Member of Congress

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John Lemondes".

John Lemondes
New York State Assembly Member