



**TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 17, 2015 TESTIMONY FROM THOMAS C. WEMYSS IN
SUPPORT OF PROPOSED S.B. NO. 730 AN ACT PROHIBITING HOMEOWNER OR
CONDOMINIUM ASSOCIATIONS FROM INTERFERING WITH OR PREVENTING
INSTALLATION OF
SOLAR PHOTOVOLTAIC SYSTEMS AND PROPOSED H.B. NO. 6435 AN ACT STREAMLINING
THE
PERMITTING PROCESS FOR THE INSTALLATION OF SOLAR PHOTOVOLTAIC SYSTEMS.**

My name is Tom Wemyss and I am the owner of PurePoint Energy, LLC

Our company is based in Norwalk, CT where we employ 6 workers. I have owned a solar company since 2007 and am an approved contractor with the CT Green Bank. We have been selected for a Town / State program called Solarize New Canaan. We work primarily in the residential and agricultural marketplace.

PERMIT APPLICATION PROCESS

One challenge we run into on a daily basis are the unnecessary and over encumbering process of permitting:

There is no consistency between towns

Highly varying costs

Some towns require a personal visit

Sometimes it takes more than one visit to a town

Some towns take up to a month to process

There is usually not a standard template to follow for each town

We must pass the cost of the permitting plus our efforts to the client making solar more expensive than it needs to be.

Here is an example of a difficult permitting process: (Greenwich maybe? Or New Canaan example)?

An example of how inconsistent pulling permits can be, for a standard roof install, between towns is comparing the Town of Southbury with the City of Milford.

For both Southbury and Milford, even if we have already pulled permits for them in the previous months, we always have to call and make sure that the required information/documents or permit costs has not changed. This alone can take up to 15-20 minutes of valuable time per project, especially if getting a hold of someone can be difficult.

The "usual" permits that are needed for a roof mount solar install are building and electrical. However, the way the Town of Southbury has there permit process system setup is - with every PV Solar Install, you need to pull a zoning permit as well, even for



roof mount installs. That's an unexpectant \$85 charge to a small business that is doing business in Southbury for the first time.

You may just be lucky enough to find the permit applications online at the town website, but with Southburys Zoning Department, you aren't so lucky. Which means wasting more valuable time calling the zoning department to fax over a copy of the zoning permit application.

If this isn't enough of a delayed process, after you mail in the zoning application, and it gets approved 5-10 days later. You are then prompted to mail in only the building permit application, for the electrical permit needs to be filled out & pulled in person at the building office, after the building permit gets approved and paid for, adding another 5-10 days.

When it comes to the City of Milford, you can download the building and electrical permits on their website along with accessing a generic/non PV related list of what to have in each permit packet and how many copies of each document is needed. However, unlike other towns or cities, instead of being able to mail the permits in and wait 5-10 days, you need to go to the Milford Building Department in person, between the hours of 8:30am - 11:00am daily, and pull the permits in person.

Before being able to be reviewed by the building inspector, you need to go to the Planning & Zoning Department and get your THREE Sets of Plans stamped off and signed by Zoning indicating "No Zoning Interest", even for roof mounted installs. After, you can then go walk down the hall to the building department and sign in at the computerized help desk. Where your "estimated wait time of 5 minutes" should really be 15 minutes, and if there is at least 2 people ahead of you, expect to be waiting there at for another an hour.

Even if you were one of the lucky ones to get there at 8:30am and get Zonings' sign off before someone else walked in for a building permit, you would still need to wait 30 minutes for the inspector to review your project and documents and then another 15 minutes for the inspector to input the project information into the system and issue the permits.

Out of the 3 visits that one of my employees has made in order to pull 4 permits at the City of Milford - her average time of going through the whole process, from planning & zoning and the building department, to having the permits issued in her hands and out the front door is 97 minutes! That's almost 5 hours! Thats more than a half a days work that could have been utilize towards the development and execution of another project.

These are just two of the many burdens that we deal with here at PurePoint with an inconsistent Permitting Process throughout the State.

CONDO ASSOCIATIONS

Condo associations and private/gated communities should not be allow to bar property owners from installing solar. Everyone should be allowed to use their roof to produce clean, domestic cost effective power. We are a small company and get a call weekly from

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a condo or a homeowner in a gated community. We usually turn the condo owners away because of the difficulties we've run into in the past. We've lost many business opportunities to residents in gated communities because of the extended time it takes to get special approvals.

The state should not give solar rebates to unqualified homeowners who install solar systems on their own. The state imposes restrictions on businesses to protect homeowners from unqualified businesses. They should impose restrictions to protect homeowners from themselves as an improper installation is dangerous.