

January 04, 2026

Re: Proposed Industrial Energy Project, 190 Ridge Road

**To the Worthington Planning Board,
Worthington Conservation Committee,
and Worthington Selectboard**

I am writing in my capacity as the Town Water Operator pursuant to my statutory and regulatory responsibilities under **M.G.L. c. 112 § 87DDDD**, which requires that public water systems in Massachusetts be operated under the supervision of a certified drinking water operator responsible for safeguarding water quality and protecting public health.

In addition, the **Massachusetts Drinking Water Regulations, 310 CMR 22.00**, promulgated by the Department of Environmental Protection under the Safe Drinking Water Act, impose affirmative duties on public water system operators to prevent contamination of drinking water sources and to ensure the sanitary protection of groundwater and surface water supplies used for public consumption.

Consistent with these obligations, I have reviewed the proposed industrial energy project at **190 Ridge Road** for its potential impacts to Worthington's public drinking water supply.

Based on my professional responsibilities and discussions with certified water operators from other Massachusetts towns, I must emphasize the level of risk this type of project poses to Worthington's drinking water resources. My consultation with other certified water operators was undertaken as a matter of professional due diligence, to ensure that my assessment was informed by independent, experienced operators with direct knowledge of industrial solar and energy facilities, and was not based solely on local or personal perspective.

Worthington's water supply is limited, interconnected, and highly vulnerable to contamination events.

Water operators in other communities who have reviewed the location and scope of the proposed project have stated that it is situated too close to Worthington's drinking water supply. They have further emphasized that if an industrial accident were to occur—whether through a spill, equipment failure, fire, or contaminated runoff—the impacts to groundwater and source water could be immediate and irreversible.

In a town such as Worthington, an incident of this nature could contaminate our source water to the extent that the entire town water supply could be rendered unusable for an extended period of time, if not permanently. In practical terms, this would leave the town without safe drinking water and without a realistic or timely alternative supply.

It is also important to note that this concern is not theoretical. There have been numerous documented accidents and emergency incidents involving large-scale solar and industrial energy facilities throughout the United States, including incidents occurring in nearby communities just a couple of towns away. These events have included fires, equipment failures, and releases of contaminated runoff. Such incidents demonstrate that even well-regulated projects can experience serious failures,

and when they do, the consequences to nearby environmental resources—particularly drinking water supplies—can be severe and long-lasting.

Unlike larger municipalities, Worthington does not have redundancy or the financial capacity to quickly replace a compromised water source. Once contaminated, remediation is uncertain, extremely costly, and may not restore the water supply to a usable condition. This is not a hypothetical concern; it is a conclusion consistently reinforced by experienced water operators.

Given these realities, I strongly urge the Planning Board to carefully consider the potential consequences to the town's water supply when reviewing this project. Protection of drinking water is non-negotiable. This application must be denied. The proposed project poses an unacceptable risk to Worthington's town water supply. The Planning Board has a clear duty to protect the town and its residents, and approval would fail that responsibility.

These conclusions are further grounded in the **Worthington Zoning By-Laws**, including:

- **Section 9 – Water Supply Protection District**, which provides that a Special Permit shall not be granted unless the proposed use will in no way, during construction or thereafter, adversely affect the existing or potential quality or quantity of water available within the District;
- **Section 9.1 – Flood Plain and River Protection Zoning**, which requires that development not result in water pollution, erosion, sedimentation, or adverse impacts to groundwater recharge areas, and mandates compliance with the Massachusetts Wetlands Protection Act (**M.G.L. c. 131 § 40**);
- **Sections 9.1.C and 9.1.D – Special Permit Standards**, which require affirmative findings that a proposed use will not create hazards detrimental to public health, safety, and welfare, and will not result in increased flood hazards or water pollution.

Based on my professional assessment and statutory obligations as the Town Water Operator, such findings cannot be made for the proposed project at 190 Ridge Road.

Thank you for your consideration of this matter and for taking seriously the responsibility to protect Worthington's drinking water supply.

h h 1/4/2026

Respectfully,

Joseph Shaw

Town Water Operator

Town of Worthington, Massachusetts