

Start a local group *#KeepVirginiaGreen*

When it comes to large-scale solar projects on agricultural or forested land in your area, solar developers have the initial advantage. They've been working hard for months to smooth the path to approval. They've met quietly with local officials, figured out how to get past their most likely roadblocks, and lined up "studies" to show how environmentally friendly and low-impact their projects will be. And they've often limited community input by sending out notices at the last minute or only notifying the immediate neighbors of a proposed solar project and not the entire community.

All this makes it critical to build a group of people to attend local government meetings, phone or email officials to express their opinions, and reach out to inform others about large solar projects being proposed for your county or town. It's never too late to start a group to promote responsible and smart solar choices!

Here are some ideas to help you start a group in your area:

1. **Hold a kick-off meeting** with people you already know. Be sure to have a signup list and notetaker at the meeting! And be respectful of everyone's time by keeping an eye on the clock.
2. **Spend some time sharing the common frustrations** everyone has already faced in pushing back against large-scale solar projects.
3. **Discuss whether people want to continue meeting.** Some people may want to be actively engaged while others don't have a lot of time but want to stay informed and would be willing to help where they can.
4. **If yes, talk about what your group's goals will be.** Goals might include things like recruiting new members, spreading the word in your community about big solar projects, or engaging more actively with local officials.
5. **Brainstorm how to achieve those goals,** either at that first meeting or at the next one. This can also include asking for volunteers who can work on specific topics in between meetings.
6. **Decide how you'll communicate with each other.** This might be an email list or a social media site (Facebook is perhaps the easiest to set up).
7. **Decide when and where to meet again.**
8. **Send a follow-up email afterwards** to thank everyone for coming and share the notes of the meeting.