

**SOLAR ENERGY FACILITIES LAW
TOWN OF DUANESBURG
LOCAL LAW No. 1 OF 2021**

BE IT ENACTED by the Town Board of the Town of Duanesburg, in the County of Schenectady, as follows:

SECTION ONE. TITLE.

This local law shall be known as the “Solar Energy Facilities Law,” and shall repeal and replace Local Law No. 1 of the year 2016.

SECTION TWO. PURPOSE.

The purpose of this local law shall be to adopt a local law regarding the review of solar energy facilities and to amend the Town of Duanesburg Zoning Ordinance by providing for the siting, development and decommissioning of solar energy systems subject to reasonable conditions to reduce potential impacts to adjoining properties while promoting development of renewable energy resources.

SECTION THREE. AUTHORITY.

This local law is adopted pursuant to sections 10 and 22 of the Municipal Home Rule Law.

SECTION FOUR. ADOPTING THE SOLAR ENERGY FACILITIES LAW AND AMENDING THE TOWN OF DUANESBURG ZONING ORDINANCE.

The Town of Duanesburg Code and Zoning Ordinance are hereby amended as follows:

1. Definitions.
 - a. Solar Energy System- A solar photovoltaic collection device and equipment that uses solar radiation to generate energy.
 - b. Solar Energy Equipment—Electrical material, hardware, inverters, conduit, storage devices, or other electrical and photovoltaic equipment associated with the production of electricity.
 - c. Solar Energy System, Accessory –a roof or ground mounted solar energy system designed to supply energy for a principal use on a residential or commercial parcel and containing Solar Energy Equipment.
 - d. Solar Energy System, Major –a ground or roof mounted solar energy system that produces power to be sold to off-site customers.

- e. Tree-Clear-Cutting -- any cutting of trees over six inches in diameter at breast height where the average residual basal area of trees over six inches in diameter at breast height remaining after such cutting is less than 30 square feet per acre.
 - f. Glare – the effect by reflections of light with intensity sufficient as determined in a commercially reasonable manner to cause annoyance, discomfort, or loss in visual performance and visibility in any material respects.
 - g. Solar Panel-- A photovoltaic device capable of collecting and converting solar energy into electricity.
 - h. Solar Storage Battery-- A device that stores solar energy and makes it available in an electrical form.
2. Solar Energy System, Accessory. An accessory solar energy system shall comply with the following requirements:
- a. A ground-mounted accessory solar energy system shall comply with the setback and height requirements for a major accessory structure in the zoning district in which it is located.
 - b. A roof-mounted accessory solar energy system shall be mounted as flush as possible to the roof. To achieve proper solar orientation, panels may exceed the roofline by five feet.
 - c. The requirements set forth below in (3)(a) – (g), with the exception that for the Solar Energy System, Accessory, ground mounted, a minimum perimeter buffer of 25 feet may be acceptable at the discretion of the Planning Board where sufficient screening exists or is proposed to screen the views of any ground mounted solar panels or equipment from surrounding properties.
3. Solar Energy System, Major. A major solar energy system shall comply with the following requirements:
- a. All electrical and control equipment, including any battery and storage cells, shall be labeled and secured to prevent unauthorized access. Such equipment shall be enclosed with a seven feet high fence as required by the National Electrical Code.
 - b. Signs. Warning signage shall be placed on solar equipment to the extent appropriate. Solar equipment shall not be used for displaying any advertising. All signs, flags, streamers or similar items, both temporary and permanent, are prohibited on solar equipment except: (a) manufacturer’s or installer’s identification; (b) appropriate warning signs and placards; (c) signs that may be required by a federal or State agency; and (d) signs that provide a 24-hour emergency contact phone number and warn of any danger.

- c. Buffer/screening. A minimum one hundred feet perimeter buffer, consisting of natural and undisturbed vegetation, shall be provided around all mechanical equipment and solar panel arrays to provide screening to adjacent properties and to minimize glare on adjacent properties and roadways. Where the natural and undisturbed vegetation does not screen the views from the mechanical equipment and solar panel arrays, the Applicant may propose to enhance the perimeter buffer to improve its ability to screen the views.
- d. Glare. Solar panels shall be placed and arranged such that reflected solar radiation or glare shall not be directed onto adjacent buildings, properties or roadways. Exterior surfaces of roof-mounted collectors and related equipment shall have a non-reflective finish and shall be color-coordinated to harmonize with roof materials and other dominant colors of the structure.
- e. Evergreen tree plantings may be required to screen portions of the site from nearby residential property, public roads, and from public sites known to include important views or vistas.
- f. Existing on-site vegetation shall be preserved to the maximum extent practicable. Clear cutting of all trees in a single contiguous area exceeding 20,000 square feet shall be prohibited. This clearing restriction shall not apply to trees cleared for the access road.
- g. Height. Ground-mounted arrays shall not exceed fifteen (15) feet in height when oriented at maximum tilt.
- h. Lot coverage. A major solar energy system shall not exceed 60 percent lot coverage. Lot coverage shall be defined as the area measured from the outer edge(s) of the arrays, inverters, batteries, storage cells and all other mechanical equipment used to create solar energy, exclusive of fencing and roadways.
- i. Site disturbance, including but not limited to, grading, soil removal, excavation, soil compaction, and tree removal in connection with installation of solar energy facilities, including ground-mounted systems, shall be minimized to the extent practicable. Forested sites shall not be deforested to construct solar energy facilities.
- j. Noise. Substations and inverters shall be set back a minimum distance to achieve no discernable difference from existing noise levels at the property line.
- k. Setbacks. Any structures and equipment shall not be placed in the one hundred feet perimeter buffer with the exception of the access road and the electrical transmission lines and poles connecting the facility to the grid, as well as the stormwater structures and fencing associated with the access road and the electrical transmission lines. Additional setbacks may be required by the Planning Board to adequately buffer adjoining properties and scenic roadways.

1. Access and parking. A road and parking will be provided to assure adequate emergency and service access. Maximum use of existing roads, public or private, shall be made. Any proposed new access road will be reviewed for fire safety purposes by the Town Building Inspector and the Chief of the Fire Company that serves the area containing the property.

4. Abandonment. An owner or operator of a major solar energy system that has not generated electricity for a period of six (6) consecutive months must notify the Town Supervisor and the Town Building Inspector in writing that the system is no longer operating. If the system ceases to operate for an additional twelve (12) consecutive months the system shall be deemed to be abandoned and shall be decommissioned within six months by the owner or operator. A decommissioning plan shall be submitted as part of the special use permit application to the Planning Board. The decommissioning plan shall include, but not be limited to, the following requirements: the plan must be signed by the owner and/or operator of the Solar Energy System and shall be submitted by the applicant, addressing the following:
 - a. The cost of removing the entire Solar Energy System shall be estimated based upon prevailing wages and any other requirements applicable to municipalities under State or federal law and no salvage value shall be attributed to any of the components of the Solar Energy System and/or the Solar Energy Equipment.
 - b. A schedule and methods for the removal of the Solar Energy System and/or the Solar Energy Equipment, including any ancillary structures.
 - c. The time required to restore the property to its pre-existing condition and to repair any damage caused to the property by the installation and removal of the Solar Energy System.
 - d. A plan for restoring the property to its preinstalled condition, including grading and vegetative stabilization to eliminate any negative impacts to surrounding properties, and, where if it was previously used for farming, with vegetation suitable for farming purposes, i.e. a hay field, crops or grazing.
 - e. A proposed Decommissioning Agreement which shall be provided by the Applicant and approved by the Town of Duanesburg Town Board. No building permit shall be issued for a Solar Energy System until the Decommissioning Agreement has been negotiated between the Applicant and the Town Board, has been approved by the Town Board and has been fully executed.

5. Security.

- a. The deposit, executions, or filing with the Town Clerk of cash, bond, or other form of security reasonably acceptable to the Town Board and/or the professional engineer advising the Town, shall be in an amount sufficient to ensure the good faith performance of the terms and conditions of the permit issued pursuant hereto and to provide for the removal and restorations of the site subsequent to removal. The amount of the bond or security shall be 125% of the cost of removal of the Solar Energy System and restoration of the property with an escalator of 2 % annually for the life of the Solar Energy System. The Decommissioning Agreement shall specify the amount of the bond and the form of the bond or equivalent financial security. No building permit shall be issued until the bond or equivalent financial security is in full force and effect and has been provided to the Town Clerk.

- b. In the event of default upon performance of such conditions, after proper notice and expiration of any cure periods, the cash deposit, bond, or security shall be forfeited to the Town, which shall be entitled to maintain an action thereon. The cash deposit, bond, or security shall remain in full force and effect until ninety (90) days after the restoration of the property as set forth in the decommissioning plan is completed.

- c. In the event of default or abandonment of the Solar Energy System, the system shall be decommissioned as set forth in Section 10(b) and 10(c) herein.
 - (1) A schedule and methods for the removal of the solar energy system from the lot; and
 - (2) A plan for restoring the property to its preinstalled condition, including grading and vegetative stabilization to eliminate any negative impacts to surrounding properties.

6 Approvals Required: a. Prior to installing a solar energy system accessory, a building permit shall be obtained from the Uniform Code Enforcement Officer of the Town of Duanesburg pursuant to the requirements set forth in Section 14.3.

- b. Prior to installing a Solar Energy System Major, the applicant shall obtain site plan approval and a special use permit from the Town of Duanesburg Planning Board. A Solar Energy System Major shall only be permitted by special use permit and site plan approval in the R-2, C-1, and C-2 Zoning Districts. The substantive and procedural requirements for site plan review and special use permit review are set forth in Section 14.6 of the Town of Duanesburg Zoning Ordinance.
- c. Ownership Changes. If the owner or operator of the Solar Energy System changes or the owner of the property changes, the special use permit shall remain in effect, provided that the successor owner or operator assumes in writing all of the obligations of the special use permit, site plan approval, decommissioning plan, bond and agreement. A new owner or operator of the Solar Energy System shall

notify the Building Inspector and the Town Supervisor of such change in ownership or operator within 30 days of the ownership change.

7. The Zoning Ordinance shall be amended to add a new section 13.8 which will provide “Solar Energy Facilities. See Solar Energy Facilities Law”.

SECTION FIVE. SEQRA DETERMINATION.

The Town Board hereby determines that the adoption of this local law is a type one action that will not have a significant effect on the environment and therefore, no other determination or procedure under the State Environmental Quality Review Act (“SEQRA”) is required.

SECTION SIX. EFFECTIVE DATE.

This local law shall become effective upon its filing in the Office of the Secretary of State.

SECTION SEVEN. SEVERABILITY.

Each separate provision of this Local Law shall be deemed independent of all other provisions therein, and if any provisions shall be deemed or declared invalid, all other provisions hereof shall remain valid and enforceable.