

JEFFERSON COUNTY
WISCONSIN

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JEFFERSON COUNTY
PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT
ZONING DIVISION

Room C1040
311 S Center Ave
Jefferson, WI 53538

zoning@jeffersoncountywi.gov
Phone: 920-674-7130
Fax 920-674-7525

DATE: January 29, 2025
TO: Jefferson County Town Clerks
RE: Proposed Solar Ordinance Text Amendment


Attached you will find proposed changes to the Jefferson County Zoning Ordinance. Specifically, the proposed changes include language regulating solar development throughout the County. The ordinance breaks solar developments into three categories: accessory, small, and large solar energy systems.

Accessory solar energy system is defined as a photovoltaic energy system that converts solar energy to usable energy, where such solar energy system is accessory to the principal use of the land and serve the land or structures on the same parcel (e.g. solar panels providing energy for a dwelling on the same lot). Accessory solar energy systems are not intended for a use as a public utility or to provide energy into the gride and generate less than 1 megawatt. Through the proposed ordinance amendment, accessory solar energy systems would be regulated through obtaining a Zoning and Land Use Permit from the County Planning & Development Dept. Accessory solar energy systems are allowed in any zoning district.

Small solar energy system is defined as connected arrays of photovoltaic panels, their supporting structures, and respective components. These facilities are designed for nominal operation at a nameplate capacity of less than 100 megawatts and do not meet the definition of an "accessory solar energy generating system." Through the proposed ordinance amendment, small solar energy systems would be regulated through obtaining a Conditional Use Permit (CUP) through the Town and County Planning & Development Dept. In addition, a Zoning and Land Use Permit would also be required prior to construction after approval of a CUP. Small solar energy systems may be located within the A-1 Exclusive Agricultural and A-2 Agricultural/ Rural Business zoning districts as a conditional use, subject to the requirements of this ordinance. In addition, a small solar energy system may be permitted as a conditional use, subject to the requirements of this ordinance, within the A-T zoning district with written approval from the closest municipality.

Large solar energy system is defined as connected arrays of photovoltaic panels, their supporting structures, and respective components. These facilities are designed for nominal operation at a nameplate capacity of 100 megawatts or more. A Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity issued by the Wisconsin Public Service Commission (PSC) is typically associated with these facilities. This includes facilities which directly convert and transfer solar energy into thermal or electrical energy. Under current state law, solar energy systems over 100 megawatts are not required to obtain local approval from the Town or County; the development receives approvals from the PSC of Wisconsin which also includes input from WI DNR. The County and Town ability to regulate large solar energy systems is limited, however, this proposed ordinance amendment would require a Zoning and Land Use Permit from the County Planning & Development Dept for any projects over 100 megawatts.

Thank you,


Matt Zangl

Director of Planning & Development/Land Information, Jefferson County

Email: mattz@jeffersoncountywi.gov

Phone: 920-674-8638