



## City of Auburn, Maine

Office of Planning & Permitting

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Auburn Planning Board

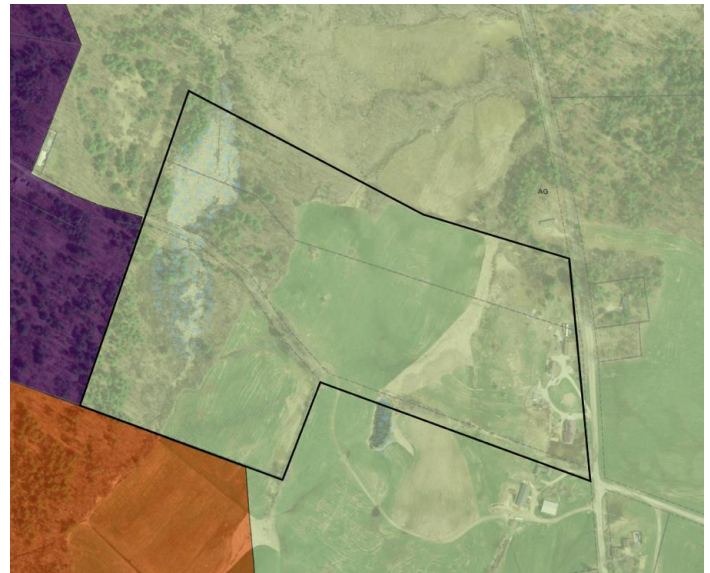
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**Subject: Staff Report on Hexagon Energy Solar Site Plan Review**

- I. **Proposal: Public Hearing/ Extension/ Site Plan Amendment:** Hexagon Energy is requesting a second extension to their original Planning Board approval from March 2021, located at Parcel I.D.s 325-030, 326-001, and 326-001-001. The applicant also proposes a site plan amendment reducing the size of the project from 4 MW to 0.99 MW.

- II. **Background:** Hexagon Energy has already received an extension for their original approval for a 4 MW Solar Project on three parcels off North River Road, Auburn Solar, LLC. The company is proposing an amendment to their already once amended plan. The amendment is reducing the size of the original project. A single one-year extension may be given upon a showing of good cause in writing by the applicant to the planning board” (Sec. 60-1308).

In March 2022, the applicant was granted an extension and amendment to downsize their original project from 4 MW to 1.99 MW to remain compliant with the changes in Maine’s Net Energy Billing Program. As the Planning Board has seen with several other solar projects, delays solidifying the Interconnection Agreement for projects larger than 1 MW have further delayed this project and driven the applicant to request an amendment to reduce the size of the project from 1.99 MW (as amended) to 0.99 MW. Also, like other projects, Hexagon Solar also facing delays is requesting an extension of their planning board site plan approval for one additional year, until March 2026. The applicant plans to have the project operational by 2025. This amendment will eliminate all wetland impacts while continuing to support local community solar, with the power to fuel approximately 250 homes in the area. The applicant has provided a table to show the changes in power generation and impact from the original project to the March 2024 amendment (Second Revision).



<b>Auburn Solar: Minor Site Revision Summary</b>	<b>Original</b>	<b>First Revision</b>	<b>Second Revision</b>
Nameplate Capacity (MW <sub>ac</sub> )	4.000	1.990	0.990
Racking System Type	Fixed Tilt	Single-Axis Tracker	Single-Axis Tracker
Fenced Project Area (Approx. acreage)	16	12.5	7
Setback from North River Road, Feet:	350	440	640
Wetland Impacts, Square Feet: <b>Direct Impacts</b> (PEM "WET MEADOW") -Driven Posts, Fencing Posts	159	50	0
Wetland Impacts, Square Feet: <b>Indirect Impacts</b> (PEM "WET MEADOW") -Shading, Mowing of Existing Field	84,500	22,215	0
<b>Total Alteration</b> to be Permitted, Square Feet: (Direct/Indirect)	<b>84,659</b>	<b>22,265</b>	<b>0</b>

Staff suggested that the applicant request an additional year approval and concur with both this request and the applicant's amendment request. In the future, the planning board may initiate an amendment to the zoning ordinance to extend the time period for which a special exception approval is valid. Solar projects, specifically, have faced long waiting times to secure connection into the electric grid.

III. **Recommended Action:** Hold a public hearing and approve the site plan amendment as presented until March 2026.

IV. **Suggested Findings of Fact:** The proposal has met the provisions of Sec. 60-1277, including:

- 1) Protection of adjacent areas against detrimental or offensive uses on the site by provision of adequate surface water drainage, buffers against artificial and reflected light, sight, sound, dust and vibration and preservation of light and air;
- 2) Convenience and safety of vehicular and pedestrian movement within the site and in relation to adjacent areas;
- 3) Adequacy of the methods of disposal for wastes; and
- 4) Protection of environment features on the site and in adjacent areas.

The proposal has also met all provisions of Sec. 60-1336 including:

- 1) That the special exception sought fulfills the specific requirements, if any, set forth in the zoning ordinance relative to such exception.
- 2) That the special exception sought will neither create nor aggravate a traffic hazard, a fire hazard or any other safety hazard.
- 3) That the special exception sought will not block or hamper the master development plan pattern of highway circulation or of planned major public or semipublic land acquisition.

- 4) That the exception sought will not alter the essential characteristics of the neighborhood and will not tend to depreciate the value of property adjoining and neighboring the property under application.
- 5) That reasonable provisions have been made for adequate land space, lot width, lot area, stormwater management in accordance with section 60-1301(14), green space, driveway layout, road access, off-street parking, landscaping, building separation, sewage disposal, water supply, fire safety, and where applicable, a plan or contract for perpetual maintenance of all the common green space and clustered off-street parking areas to ensure all such areas will be maintained in a satisfactory manner.
- 6) That the standards imposed are, in all cases, at least as stringent as those elsewhere imposed by the city building code and by the provisions of this chapter.
- 7) That essential city services which will be required for the project are presently available or can be made available without disrupting the city's master development plan.

V. **Suggested Motion:** I make a motion to approve Hexagon Energy's site plan and special exception amendment and extension to their original Planning Board approval, until March of 2026, located at Parcel I.D.s 325-030, 326-001, and 326-001-001. The approval is for the site plan amendment reducing the size of the project from 4 MW to 0.99 MW with the findings that the proposal meets the provisions of Chapter 60, Article XVI Division 2- Site Plan Review and Division 3- Special Exception Review.