



City of Auburn, Maine

Office Economic and Community Development

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To: Auburn Planning Board
From: Megan Norwood, City Planner II
Re: Solar Energy Generating Systems Ordinance: Add Ag-Zone
Date: February 11, 2020

I. BACKGROUND – As the Planning Board is aware, Staff has been receiving inquiries from potential Developers exploring opportunities for solar installations in the Ag-Zone. At the February 3, 2020 City Council meeting, the City Council asked the Planning Board to add provisions for solar in the Ag-Zone to the recently drafted Solar Energy Generating Systems ordinance (attached here).

The Solar Energy Generating Systems ordinance was drafted to allow the addition of other Zoning Districts at a later date with applicable standards rather than reinventing the wheel with a brand-new ordinance.

There are some standards the Planning Board will definitely want to consider in the Agriculture Zone that were not items of consideration for the Industrial Zone. For example, provisions for ensuring either valuable agricultural land is not used for solar or provisions to ensure the soils are not disturbed and the land can be converted back to agriculture after the project is completed.

Some questions for the Planning Board to think about:

- Is the one-acre threshold for ground-mounted and dual-use systems (defined as the total area of a parcel(s) physically occupied by the Solar Energy Generating System installation) also adequate for solar projects in the Ag-Zone?
- Yard Requirements: Should the setbacks follow the same setbacks as the Ag-Zone?
- Lot Coverage: What restrictions in terms of lot coverage should be in place for Solar Energy Generating Systems in the Ag-Zone?
- Height Regulations: Is the 30 Foot Height Restriction for equipment shelters, storage facilities, transformers and substations okay for the Ag-Zone?
- When we drafted the Ordinance, we included Technical and Safety, Maintenance, Glare, Visual Impact, Lighting, Ground Permeability, O&M Plan and NFPA Standards as typical of any Solar Energy Generating System. As you look through the Ordinance are there any of those that you would change for the Ag-Zone?
- What about the abandonment/decommissioning procedures? Should they be the same for solar installations in the Ag-Zone?

II. STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS – Staff recommends the Planning Board review the ordinance for the Industrial District and decide which standards should be changed for the Ag-Zone. For the March meeting, Staff will provide a list of potential additional standards that could be used solely for projects in the Ag-Zone.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Megan Norwood".

Megan Norwood
City Planner II