

COMMERCIAL SOLAR ENERGY FACILITY SITING ORDINANCE

I. DEFINITIONS

- A. "Applicant" means the entity who submits to the county a special use permit application for the siting and operation of any commercial solar energy facility, substation, battery energy storage system, or supporting facilities. All references to applicant in this ordinance shall include applicant's successors-in-interest and assigns, which includes a commercial solar energy facility permittee.
- B. "Battery energy storage system (BESS)" means one or more devices, assembled together, capable of storing energy in order to supply electrical energy at a future time, not to include a stand-alone 12-volt car battery or an electric motor vehicle.
- C. "Commercial operation date" means the calendar date on which the commercial solar energy facility produces power for commercial sale, not including test power.
- D. "Commercial solar energy facility" or "facility" means any device or assembly of devices that is ground-installed and uses solar energy from the sun for generating electricity for the primary purpose of wholesale or retail sale and not primarily for consumption on the property.
- E. "Commercial solar energy building permit" or "building permit" means a permit necessary for the commencement of work performed toward the construction, erection, or installation of an approved commercial solar energy facility, substation, battery energy storage system, supporting facilities, or operations and maintenance building in connection with a commercial solar energy facility. A commercial solar energy building permit may be issued by the county after a commercial solar energy facility has been approved by obtaining a special use permit from the county board, and the zoning administrator determines that all conditions, if any, have been satisfied that are imposed by the special use permit. The commercial solar energy building permit shall require the application to deliver a written notice to proceed for the commercial solar energy facility to the county prior to the commencement of construction of the commercial solar energy facility. The term "commencement of construction," as used in this ordinance, includes any site development work (e.g., demolition, grubbing, grading, excavation, road work, construction of project-related structures and infrastructure improvements, etc.) regarding the commercial solar energy facility.
- F. "Commercial solar energy facility permittee" means an applicant who applies for and receives a special use permit under this ordinance for the siting and operation of any commercial solar energy facility, substation, battery energy storage system, or supporting facilities. All references to a commercial solar energy facility permittee in this ordinance shall include a commercial solar energy facility permittee's successors-in-interest and assigns.
- G. "Facility owner" or "owner" means the person, entity, or entities with an equity interest in a commercial solar energy facility, including their respective successors-in-interest and assigns. The facility owner does not mean (i) the property owner from whom land is leased for locating a commercial solar energy facility (unless the property owner has an equity interest in a commercial solar energy facility); or (ii) any person holding a security interest in a commercial

solar energy facility solely to secure an extension of credit, or a person foreclosing on such security interest, provided that after foreclosure, such person seeks to sell the commercial solar energy facility at the earliest practicable date. This definition includes the definition of facility owner as defined in 55 ILCS 5/5-12020.

- H. "Financial assurance" or "financial security" or "decommission security" means assurance from a credit worthy party, examples of which include a surety bond (e.g., performance and payment bond), trust instrument, cash escrow, or irrevocable letter of credit.
- I. "Notice to proceed" means a written document, named as such, stating that the applicant expresses an intent to commence construction activities on a commercial solar energy facility and identifying the date on which the construction activities are scheduled to commence.
- J. "Nonparticipating property" means real property that is not a participating property.
- K. "Nonparticipating residence" means a residence that is located on nonparticipating property and that is existing and occupied on the date that a special use permit application to develop the commercial solar energy facility is filed with the county.
- L. "Occupied community building" means any one or more of the following buildings that is existing and occupied on the date that a special use permit application to develop the commercial solar energy facility is filed with the county: a school, place of worship, day care facility, public library, or community center.
- M. "Operator" means the person or entity responsible for the day-to-day operation and maintenance of a commercial solar energy facility, including any third-party subcontractors. The operator must be a qualified solar power professional. All references to operator in this ordinance shall include operator's successors-in-interest and assigns.
- N. "Participating property" means real property that is the subject of a written agreement between a facility owner and the owner of the real property that provides the facility owner an easement, option, lease, or license to use the real property for the purpose of constructing a commercial solar energy facility, substation, battery energy storage system, or supporting facilities. Participating property also includes real property that is owned by a facility owner for the purpose of constructing a commercial solar energy facility, substation, battery energy storage system, or supporting facilities.
- O. "Participating residence" means a residence that is located on participating property and that is existing and occupied on the date that a special use permit application to develop the commercial solar energy facility is filed with the county.
- P. "Professional engineer" means a qualified individual who is licensed as a professional engineer in the State of Illinois. Where a structural engineer is required to take some action under terms of this ordinance, a professional engineer may serve as the structural engineer if he or she has the appropriate structural engineering certification.
- Q. "Protected lands" means real property that is subject to a permanent conservation right consistent with the Illinois Real Property Conservation Rights Act (765 ILCS 120/1 *et seq.*) or

registered or designated as a nature preserve, buffer, or land and water reserve under the Illinois Natural Areas Preservation Act (525 ILCS 30/1 *et seq.*).

- R. "Public conservation lands" means land owned in fee title by county, state, or federal agencies and managed specifically for conservation purposes, including but not limited to county, state, and federal parks, state and federal wildlife management areas, state scientific and natural areas, and federal wildlife refuges and waterfowl protection areas. Public conservation lands do not include private lands upon which conservation easements have been sold to government agencies or non-profit conservation organizations. Public conservation lands also do not include private lands for which the owners have entered into contractual relationships with government or non-profit conservation organizations for conservation purposes.
- S. "Special use permit" means a permit approved by the county board, after a public hearing, allowing a particular use at a specified location subject to compliance with certain specified conditions as may be required by the county board and included in the special use permit.
- T. "Substation" means the apparatus that collects and connects the electrical collection system of the commercial solar energy facility and increases the voltage for connection with the utility's transmission lines.
- U. "Supporting facilities" means the transmission lines, substations, access roads, storage containers, and equipment associated with the generation and storage of electricity by the commercial solar energy facility.

II. **APPLICABILITY**

This ordinance governs the siting of commercial solar energy facilities, substations, battery energy storage systems, and supporting facilities that generate electricity to be sold to wholesale or retail markets.

III. **PROHIBITIONS**

- A. No commercial solar energy facility, substation, battery energy storage system, or supporting facilities governed by this ordinance shall be constructed, erected, installed, or located within the county, unless prior siting approval has been obtained, via a special use permit, for each individual commercial solar energy facility or for a group of commercial solar energy facilities under a joint special use permit application pursuant to this ordinance. Commercial solar energy facilities are only allowed in agricultural or industrial zoned districts, via a special use permit.
- B. No BESS governed by this ordinance shall be transported, constructed, erected, installed, located, or operated within Mason County, unless it is connected to a commercial solar energy facility (or commercial wind energy facility); and
- C. Special use permit approval has been granted by the county board and a building permit has been issued by the Mason County Zoning Office; and

- D. Road use agreements and decommissioning agreements have been entered into for each applicable governmental agency for the BESS.
- E. For the purposes of this ordinance, a BESS incorporated as part of the original design submitted in the special use application for a commercial solar energy facility (or commercial wind energy facility), is considered covered by the special use permit and building permit if approved and issued. A BESS proposed to be connected to an existing commercial solar energy facility (or existing commercial wind energy facility) is required to seek and obtain a separate special use permit, via a special use permit application, as well as a building permit, prior to the transportation, construction, erection, installation, location, or operation of the BESS. No BESS is allowed in a commercial solar energy facility (or commercial wind energy facility) unless it is part of the design of the facility included in the special use permit application or obtains a separate special use permit and building permit pursuant to the terms of this ordinance. A BESS seeking a special use application to connect to an existing commercial solar energy facility (or existing commercial wind energy facility) must comply with all aspects of this ordinance, unless expressly stated otherwise.
- F. A BESS is only allowed on parcels zoned by Mason County as “agricultural” or “industrial” and for which a special use permit and building permit has been obtained.
- G. At least sixty (60) days prior to filing a special use permit application with the county, the applicant must hold an in-person meeting at a location within the township of the planned commercial solar energy facility or BESS, or if no sufficient location is available within the township, a location in the county, to inform the public of the project. In its special use application, the applicant shall provide sufficient documentation showing that a public meeting has been held and that all landowners and residents within 1.5 miles of the project footprint and within the project footprint have been notified of said meeting.

IV. SPECIAL USE PERMIT APPLICATION

- A. To obtain siting approval, an applicant must first submit a special use permit application to the county.
- B. The special use permit application shall contain or be accompanied by the following:
 - 1. A commercial solar energy facility summary, including, to the extent available: (a) a general description of the project, including (i) its approximate overall name plate generating capacity; (ii) the potential equipment manufacturer(s); (iii) the type(s) of solar panels, cells, and modules; (iv) the number of solar panels, cells, and modules; (v) the maximum height of all solar panels at full tilt; (vi) the number of substations; (vii) a project site plan, project phasing plan, and project construction timeline; and (viii) the general location of the project; and (b) a description of the applicant, owner, and operator, including their respective business structures.
 - 2. Two (2) legal descriptions shall be submitted: (1) the subject property or properties on which the commercial solar energy facility, substation, BESS, and supporting facilities will be located, which will be used for purposes of the public notice; and (2) the specific areas to be occupied by the commercial solar energy facility, substation, BESS, and supporting

facilities. In addition to the legal descriptions, the applicant must also submit a map depicting the two areas. Under no circumstances shall a project granted a special use permit be allowed to expand beyond the designated area to be occupied by the commercial solar energy facility, substation, BESS, or supporting facilities.

3. The name, address, and phone number of the applicant, owner and operator, and all property owners, if known, and documentation demonstrating land ownership or legal control of the property.
4. A site plan for the commercial solar energy facility showing the planned location of solar panels, including legal descriptions for each site, participating and nonparticipating residences, occupied community buildings, parcel boundary lines (including identification of adjoining properties), setback lines, public access roads and turnout locations, substation(s), operations and maintenance buildings, electrical cabling to the substation(s), ancillary equipment, third party transmission lines, the location of any wetlands, flood plain, drainage structures including surface ditches and subsurface drainage lines, underground mines, scenic and natural areas within one thousand five hundred (1,500) feet of the proposed commercial solar energy facility, and the layout of all structures within the geographical boundaries of any applicable setback.
5. A proposed decommissioning plan for the commercial solar energy facility.
6. All required studies, reports, certifications, and approvals demonstrating compliance with the provisions of this ordinance.
7. An Agricultural Impact Mitigation Agreement (“AIMA”) executed between the applicant and the Illinois Department of Agriculture.
8. The topographic map shall include the commercial solar energy facility site and the surrounding area.
9. Any other information normally required by the county as part of its permitting requirements for siting buildings or other structures.
10. Waivers from the setback requirements executed by the occupied community building owners and/or the nonparticipating property owners bearing a file stamp from the Mason County Recorder of Deeds confirming that the waiver was recorded against title to the affected real property.
11. Results and recommendations from the Illinois Department of Natural Resources obtained through the Ecological Compliance Assessment Tool or a comparable successor tool.
12. Results of any United States Fish and Wildlife Service Information for Planning and Consultation (“IPaC”), environmental review or a comparable successor tool that is consistent with applicable United States Fish and Wildlife Service solar wildlife guidelines.

13. Information demonstrating that the commercial solar energy facility will avoid protected lands.
14. Any other information required by the county or county consultants that is necessary to evaluate the siting application and operation of the commercial solar energy facility and to demonstrate that the commercial solar energy facility meets each of the regulations in this ordinance, including the special use permit standards set forth below.
15. Material changes to the application are not permitted once the notice of public hearing has been published, unless requested or permitted by the county.
16. The applicant shall submit twelve (12) copies of the special use permit application to the county, and at least one (1) copy in electronic format.

V. DESIGN AND INSTALLATION

A. Design Safety Certification.

1. Commercial solar energy facilities shall conform to applicable industry standards, including those of the American National Standards Institute ("ANSI"). Applicants shall submit certificates of design compliance that equipment manufacturers have obtained from Underwriters Laboratories ("UL"), or an equivalent third party. All solar panels, cells, and modules; solar panel mounts and racking, including any helical piles, ground screws, ballasts, or other anchoring systems shall be new equipment commercially available; no used or experimental equipment shall be used without the approval of a variance by the county board.
2. Following the granting of siting approval under this ordinance, a structural engineer shall certify, as part of the commercial solar energy facility building permit application process, that the design of the commercial solar energy facility is within accepted professional standards, given local soil, subsurface and climate conditions.

B. Electrical Components.

All electrical components of the commercial solar energy facility shall conform to the applicable local, state, and national codes, and relevant national and international standards (e.g., ANSI and International Electrical Commission).

C. Height.

No component of a solar panel, cell, or modules may exceed twenty (20) feet in height above the ground at full tilt.

D. Aesthetics and Lighting.

1. **Vegetative Screening:** A vegetative screen shall be provided for any part of the commercial solar energy facility that is visible to nonparticipating residence. The landscaping screen shall be located between the required fencing and the property line

of the participating parcel upon which the facility sits. The vegetative screening shall include a continuous line of native evergreen foliage and/or native shrubs and/or native trees and/or any existing wooded area and/or plantings of tall native grasses and other native flowering plants.

2. Lighting: If lighting is provided at the commercial solar energy facility, lighting shall be shielded and downcast such that the light does not spill onto the adjacent parcel.
3. Intra-project Power and Communication Lines: All power lines used to collect power and all communication lines shall be buried underground at a depth in accordance with the Agricultural Impact Mitigation Agreement ("AIMA") until same reach the property line or a substation adjacent to the property line.

E. Evaluation for Noxious Weeds and Weed Management Plan.

Applicant shall perform an assessment of the property for the presence of noxious weed, in particular, those regulated by the Illinois Noxious Weed Law (505 ILCS 100/1 *et seq.*) and the Illinois Exotic Weed Act (525 ILCS 10/1 *et seq.*). In addition to those weeds specifically regulated by statute and regulation, the applicant shall perform an assessment of the property for all species of *Amaranthus*, including but not limited to, *Amaranthus Tuberculatus* (waterhemp, roughfruit waterhemp, roughfruit amaranth, etc.) and *Palmer Amaranth* (Palmer's pigweed, carelessweed, dioecious amaranth, etc.). Such assessment shall include the presence and propensity for such weeds to exist on the property and a plan for eradication and management of such weeds. The weed management plan must be submitted to the Mason County Zoning Office and approved by the Mason County Board prior to the issuance of a building permit for any portion of the facility. Failure to properly control weeds upon the facility shall be cause for termination of the special use permit.

F. Fencing.

A fence of eight (8) feet in height shall enclose and secure the commercial solar energy facility. Fencing shall not be climbable and shall completely shield the solar array from view.

G. Warnings.

1. A reasonably visible warning sign concerning voltage must be placed at the base of all pad-mounted transformers and substations.
2. Visible, reflective, colored objects, such as flags, plastic sleeves, reflectors, or tape shall be placed on the anchor points of guy wires and along the guy wires up to a height of fifteen (15) feet from the ground.

H. Setback Requirements.

1. The commercial solar energy facility shall be sited as follows, with setback distances measured from the nearest edge of any component of the facility:

- a. Occupied community buildings and dwellings on nonparticipating properties: One hundred fifty (150) feet to the nearest point on the outside wall of the structure.
 - b. Nonparticipating residences: One hundred fifty (150) feet to the nearest point on the outside wall of the structure.
 - c. Boundary lines of participating property: None.
 - d. Boundary lines of nonparticipating property: Fifty (50) feet to the nearest point on the property line of the nonparticipating property.
 - e. Public road rights-of-way: Fifty (50) feet the nearest edge of the public road right-of-way.
2. The setback requirements for nonparticipating properties may be waived by the written consent of the owner(s) of each affected nonparticipating property. The applicant does not need to obtain a variance from the county upon waiver by the property owner of any of the above setback requirements. Any waiver of any of the above setback requirements shall run with the land and be recorded with the Recorder of Deeds of the county.
3. Any commercial solar energy facility that incorporates a BESS shall abide by the following setbacks unless such setbacks would preclude the development of a commercial solar energy facility, then the setback provisions shall be minimally adjusted as to allow for the development of the commercial solar energy facility:
 - a. 200 feet from the property line right-of-way;
 - b. All components, except the interconnection point, installed as part of the BESS shall be setback at least 500 hundred feet from the nearest edge of any component of the BESS from any occupied community building and dwellings on nonparticipating properties;
 - c. If a BESS is enclosed within the project area of commercial solar energy facility, no further fencing is required. If a BESS is not enclosed within a commercial solar energy facility, the BESS shall be enclosed by a 10-foot-high fence with a locking gate to prevent unauthorized access unless housed within a dedicated-use building.
4. Single specimens of trees, shrubbery, or cultivated ground cover such as green grass, ivy, succulents, or similar plants used as ground covers shall be permitted to the extent that they do not form a means of readily transmitting fire. Removal of trees should be minimized to the extent possible.
5. Areas within twenty (20) feet on each side of a BESS shall be cleared of all combustible material, including vegetation. All BESS systems shall be set on a concrete pad with a concrete or gravel buffer surrounding the BESS on all sides and extending at least 20 feet on all sides.

I. Compliance with Additional Regulations.

Nothing in this ordinance is intended to preempt other applicable state and federal laws and regulations.

J. Use of Public Roads.

1. An applicant proposing to use any county, municipality, township, or village road(s), for the purpose of transporting commercial solar energy facility, substation, battery energy storage system, or supporting facilities parts and/or equipment for construction, operation, or maintenance of the commercial solar energy facility, substation(s), battery energy storage system(s), or supporting facilities, shall:

- a. Identify all such public roads; and
- b. Obtain applicable weight and size permits from relevant government agencies prior to construction.

2. To the extent an applicant must obtain a weight or size permit from the county, municipality, township or village, the applicant shall:

- a. Conduct a pre-construction baseline survey to determine existing road conditions for assessing potential future damage; and

- b. Any proposed public roads that will be used for construction purposes shall be identified and approved in writing by the respective road district commissioner and the county engineer prior to the granting of the special use permit. Traffic for construction purposes shall be limited to these roads. All overweight and/or oversized loads to be transported on public roads may require a permit from the respective highway authority. Any road damage caused by the transport of the facility's equipment, the installation, maintenance, or removal, must be completely repaired to the reasonable satisfaction of the road district commissioner and the county engineer. The road district commissioner and county engineer may choose to require either remediation of road repair upon completion of the commercial solar energy facility or are authorized to collect fees for overweight and/or oversized load permits. Further, financial assurance in an amount to be fixed by the road district commissioner to ensure the road district or the county that future repairs are completed to their reasonable satisfaction shall be provided. applicant shall submit a draft form of said financial assurance with application for special use permit.

- c. Enter into a road use agreement with the county and each affected road district that includes the following provisions, at a minimum:

- i. Project layout map;
- ii. Transportation impact analysis;
- iii. Pre-construction plans'
- iv. Project traffic map;

- v. Project scope of repairs;
- vi. Post-construction repairs;
- vii. Insurance;
- viii. Financial security in forms and amounts acceptable to the county;

The road use agreement shall require applicant to be responsible for the reasonable cost of improving roads used to construct the commercial solar energy facility and the reasonable cost of repairing roads used by the facility owner during construction of the commercial solar energy facility so that those roads are in a condition that is safe for the driving public after the completion of the commercial solar energy facility construction. Roadways improved in preparation for and during the construction of the commercial solar energy facility shall be repaired and restored to the improved condition at the reasonable cost of the developer if the roadways have degraded or were damaged as a result of construction-related activities.

- 3. All repairs and improvements to public roads and roadway appurtenances shall be subject to the prior approval of the county before being made and shall also be subject to inspection and acceptance by the county after such repairs and improvements are completed. The county's road use agreement, and any further agreements contemplated therein, regarding the maintenance and repair of public roads and highways, must be approved by the county board prior to the board's approval of any commercial solar energy facility building permit applications related to the construction of the proposed commercial solar energy facility.

K. Site Assessment.

To ensure that the subsurface conditions of the site will provide proper support for the commercial solar energy facility and soil restoration, the applicant, at its expense, shall provide soil and geotechnical boring reports to the county engineer as part of its commercial solar energy facility building permit. The applicant shall follow the guidelines for conservation practices impact mitigation submitted by the county soil and water conservation district (or equivalent regulatory agency). Also, the applicant shall submit grading plans for the proposed substations for review and comment by the county soil and water conservation district prior to the issuance of any commercial solar energy facility building permit for the construction of said substations.

L. Noise Levels.

Noise levels from commercial solar energy facilities shall be in compliance with applicable Illinois Pollution Control Board ("IPCB") regulations. The applicant shall submit manufacturer's sound power level characteristics and other relevant data regarding noise characteristics necessary for a competent noise analysis. The applicant, through the use of a qualified professional, shall appropriately demonstrate compliance with the applicable noise requirements in its special use permit application.

M. Agricultural Impact Mitigation.

Pursuant to 505 ILCS 147/15(a), the applicant, at its expense, shall enter into an Agricultural Impact Mitigation Agreement ("AIMA") with the Illinois Department of Agriculture prior to any public hearing required before a siting decision on the special use permit application for the commercial solar energy facility. All impacted agricultural land, whether impacted during construction, operation, or decommissioning activities, must, at a minimum, be remediated by the applicant pursuant to the terms of the AIMA with the Illinois Department of Agriculture. The applicant shall submit the executed AIMA to the county as part of the special use permit application.

N. As-Built Map and Plans.

Within sixty (60) calendar days of completion of construction of the commercial solar energy facility, the applicant or operator shall deliver "as-built" maps, site plan and engineering plans for the commercial solar energy facility that have been signed and stamped by a professional engineer and a licensed surveyor.

O. Engineer's Certificate.

The commercial solar energy facility engineer's certificate shall be completed by a structural engineer registered in the State of Illinois or by a professional engineer with a certification from a structural engineer registered in the State of Illinois and shall certify that the specific soils and subsurface conditions at the site can support the apparatus, given local soil, subsurface and climate conditions. The commercial solar energy facility engineer's certificate shall be a public record and shall be submitted as part of the special use permit application.

P. Conformance with Approved application and Plans.

The applicant shall construct and operate the commercial solar energy facility in substantial conformance with the construction plans contained in a county- approved submitted special use permit application(s), conditions placed upon the operation of the facility, this ordinance and all applicable state, federal and local laws and regulations.

Q. Additional Terms and Conditions.

1. All technical submissions as defined in the Professional Engineering Practice Act of 1989 (225 ILCS 325/1 *et seq.*) and contained in the special use permit application shall be prepared and signed by an Illinois professional engineer (or structural engineer) for the relevant discipline.
2. The county may retain a qualified, independent code inspector or professional engineer both to make appropriate inspections of the commercial solar energy facility during and after construction and to consult with the county to confirm that the construction, substantial repair, replacement, repowering and/or decommissioning of the commercial solar energy facility is performed in compliance with applicable electrical and building codes. The cost and fees so incurred by the county in retaining said inspector or engineer shall be promptly reimbursed by the applicant of the commercial solar energy facility.

3. The special use permit granted to the applicant shall bind and inure to the benefit of the applicant, its successors-in-interest, and assigns. If any provision in this ordinance, or conditions placed upon the operation of the commercial solar energy facility is held invalid, such invalidity shall not affect any other provision of this ordinance that can be given effect without the invalid provision and, to this end, the provisions in this ordinance are severable.
4. The applicant shall provide an executed road use agreement between the applicant and the appropriate governing road and highway jurisdictions or the Illinois Department of Transportation, to the county showing approved entrances prior to the issuance of any commercial solar energy facility building permit.

VI. OPERATION

A. Maintenance.

1. Annual Report. The applicant must submit, on an annual basis on the anniversary date of the special use permit application, an operation and maintenance report to the county. The report shall contain the following information: (i) a general description of any physical repairs, replacements or modification(s) to the commercial solar energy facility and/or its infrastructure; (ii) complaints pertaining to setbacks, noise, appearance, safety, lighting and use of any public roads received by the applicant concerning the commercial solar energy facility and the resolution of such complaints; (iii) calls for emergency services; (iv) status of liability insurance; and (v) a general summary of service calls to the commercial solar energy facility. Failure to provide the annual report shall be considered a material violation of this ordinance and subject to Article X (Remedies).
2. Re-Certification. Any physical modification to the commercial solar energy facility that alters the mechanical load, mechanical load path, or major electrical components shall require re-certification under section VI(A)(1) of this ordinance. Like-kind replacements and modifications that are made in the ordinary course of operations, including expected repairs and warranty items, shall not require re-certification. Prior to making any physical modification (other than a like-kind replacement or other modifications made in the ordinary course of operations), the applicant shall confer with a relevant third-party certifying entity identified in the design and safety certification section, paragraph 1, of this ordinance to determine whether the physical modification requires re-certification.

B. Coordination with Emergency Responders.

1. The applicant shall submit to the local emergency responders a copy of the site plan, standard operating procedures (“SOPs”) and standard operating guidelines (“SOGs”), and any amendments to such documents, for the commercial solar energy facility so that the local law enforcement, fire protection district and rescue units, emergency medical service providers and emergency management service providers that have jurisdiction over each tower site may evaluate and coordinate their emergency response plans with the applicant of the commercial solar energy facility.

2. The applicant, at its expense, shall provide annual training for, and the necessary equipment to, the operator and local emergency response authorities and their personnel so that they can properly respond to a potential emergency at the commercial solar energy facility.
 3. The applicant and the operator shall cooperate with all local emergency responders to develop an emergency response plan. The plan shall include, at a minimum, 24-hour contact information (names, titles, email addresses, cell phone numbers) for the applicant and the operator and at least three (3) designated commercial solar energy facility representatives (a primary representative with two (2) alternate representatives, each of whom are on-call 24 hours per day / 7 days per week / 365 days per year). Any change in the designated commercial solar energy facility representative or his/her contact information shall be promptly communicated to the county. The content of the emergency response plan, including the 24-hour contact information, shall be reviewed and updated on an annual basis.
 4. Nothing in this section shall alleviate the need to comply with all other applicable life safety, fire / emergency laws and regulations.
- C. Water, Sewer, Materials Handling, Storage, and Disposal.
1. All solid wastes related to the construction, operation and maintenance of the commercial solar energy facility shall be removed from the site promptly and disposed of in accordance with all federal, state, and local laws.
 2. All hazardous materials related to the construction, operation and maintenance of the commercial solar energy facility shall be handled, stored, transported, and disposed of in accordance with all applicable local, state, and federal laws.
 3. The commercial solar energy facility shall comply with existing septic and well regulations as required by the county Health Department and the State of Illinois Department of Public Health.
- D. Signage.

Signage regulations are to be consistent with ANSI standards. A reasonably visible warning sign concerning voltage shall be placed at the base of all pad-mounted transformers and substations, and at all entrances to the commercial solar energy facility.

E. Drainage Systems.

The applicant, at its expense, will repair, in a prompt and timely manner, all waterways, drainage ditches, agricultural drainage systems, field tiles, or any other private and public infrastructure improvements damaged during construction, maintenance and operation phases of the commercial solar energy facility in accordance with the Agricultural Impact Mitigation Agreement (“AIMA”).

VII. LIABILITY INSURANCE AND INDEMNIFICATION

- A. Commencing with the issuance of a commercial solar energy facility building permit, the applicant shall maintain a current general comprehensive liability policy and automobile liability coverage covering bodily injury, death and illness, and property damage with limits of at least five million dollars (\$5,000,000.00) per occurrence and twenty million dollars (\$20,000,000.00). The applicant shall file the original certificate of insurance upon commencement of project construction prior to the issuance of a commercial solar energy facility building permit, with corresponding policies and endorsements to be provided within sixty (60) days of issuance, and at each subsequent renewal, at least annually thereafter.
- B. The applicant and owner shall defend, indemnify and hold harmless the county and its officers, appointed and elected officials, employees, attorneys, engineers and agents (collectively and individually, the "indemnified parties") from and against any and all claims, demands, losses, suits, causes of action, damages, injuries, costs, expenses and liabilities whatsoever, including reasonable attorney's fees relating to or arising out of the issuance of the special use permit or the construction, operation, maintenance and removal of the commercial solar energy facility including, without limitation, liability for property damage or personal injury (including death or illness), whether said liability is premised on contract or on tort (including without limitation strict liability or negligence) or any acts or omissions of the applicant, the owner or the operator under this ordinance or the special use permit, except to the extent any such claims, demands, losses, suits, causes of action, damages, injuries, costs, expenses and liabilities arise from the negligence or intentional acts of such indemnified parties. This general indemnification shall not be construed as limiting or qualifying the county's other indemnification rights available under the law.

VIII. DECOMMISSIONING AND SITE RECLAMATION PLAN REQUIRED

- A. Applicant (or owner, if different from applicant) must submit a decommissioning plan with cost estimation to the county as part of the siting application and provide testimony supporting the calculation of costs provided in said plan during the public hearing on the application. Prior to receiving any building permit for the commercial solar energy facility, the applicant or owner shall provide a decommissioning agreement and post the required financial assurances for the benefit of the county. The decommissioning agreement and financial assurances shall comply with 55 ILCS 5/5-12020. Periodically, and as required by the Agricultural Impact Mitigation Agreement ("AIMA"), the owner must update the decommissioning plan, cost estimations, and provide update financial assurances to the benefit of the county.
- B. A decommissioning agreement shall be required to ensure that facilities are properly removed after their useful life. No building permits will be issued prior to the execution of an approved decommissioning agreement with the county. This agreement and financial assurances in benefit to the county must be compliant with the Department of Agriculture's standard solar AIMA, version 8.19.19 and 55 ILCS 5/5-12020.
- C. All BESS integrated into a commercial solar energy facility (or commercial wind energy facility) shall require a separate decommissioning plan, decommissioning agreement and Decommissioning financial assurance. No building permits will be issued prior the execution of an approved decommissioning agreement with the county for any BESS.

- D. An update to the decommissioning plan shall be submitted to the county every three years. In addition, any decommissioning plans signed by the party responsible for decommissioning and the landowner (if different) shall be submitted with the application.
- E. The county holds the right to require additional information as the county deems necessary to be part of the review of this plan.

IX. COMPLAINTS AND COMPLAINT PROCEDURE

- A. Prior to the commencement of construction of the project and during the entire term of the special use and any extension, company shall establish a telephone number hotline for the general public to call with any complaints, comments, or questions (the "comment hotline"). The comment hotline number shall be publicized to the satisfaction of the zoning administrator in order to ensure that the general public is aware of the comment hotline number. The comment hotline number shall be posted at the operations and maintenance center and the construction marshalling yard. The comment hotline number shall be manned at all times during regular business hours or allow for recording of messages during other times. Each call to the comment hotline shall be logged by the company, and such log shall identify the name, address, to the extent provided, and reason for the call. Company shall maintain a Facebook or other social media site with links to the procedures for using the comment hotline. company shall provide the zoning administrator with the call log on a monthly basis to the extent allowed by law, and company shall retain copies of the log for a minimum of two years. Company shall take reasonably necessary actions to resolve all legitimate complaints. If the company shall, in the reasonable discretion of the zoning administrator, fail to take reasonably necessary action to resolve any legitimate complaint, the zoning administrator may direct company to take such reasonably necessary action. During the construction of the project, the company shall maintain updated contact information on file with the zoning administrator for addressing complaints related to construction activities. The company shall designate a contact person who will respond to inquiries from the zoning administrator. Once the project has reached commercial operation following the conclusion of construction activities, the company shall maintain permanent contact information with the zoning administrator including a designated representative of the company along with a phone number and email address, and a 24-hour emergency contact phone number (the "emergency number"). The emergency number shall be manned at all times. Company shall also provide these phone numbers and email addresses to the Mason County emergency telephone service. If the zoning administrator or county board retains any expert or consultant relating to such complaints, company shall reimburse the county for all reasonable expenses. In the event of a disagreement between the zoning administrator and the company and/or the person making the complaint concerning resolution of the complaint, then the company and/or the person making the complaint may appeal the decision of the zoning administrator to the zoning board of appeals.
- B. Subject to any other provision of these conditions, any alleged breach or violation of the conditions listed herein, including an alleged failure to comply with any federal, state or local regulation now or hereafter in effect, and any penalty herein, including termination of rights granted by or the invalidity of the special use permit, as a result of such breach or violation, shall be subject to the company curing or commencing to cure and thereafter diligently

pursuing cure of such breach or violation within sixty (60) days after receipt of written notice from the county of such breach or violation.

X. REMEDIES

- A. The applicant's failure to materially comply with any of the provisions under the special use permit, any conditions imposed on the project, and/or failure to comply with any law or regulation shall be a default and shall be grounds for revocation of the special use permit by the county board.
- B. Prior to implementation of the applicable county procedures for the resolution of default(s), the county board must first provide written notice to the applicant and operator, setting forth the alleged default(s) and provide an opportunity for the applicant or the operator to cure the default(s) within a thirty (30) calendar day period from the date of the notice. Should the applicant commence the cure within that 30-day cure period, and diligently pursues a cure, then the applicant shall receive an additional sixty (60) days to continue to pursue the cure before the county pursues procedures for the resolution of default. If the default relates to a life safety issue or interference with local, government public safety (police, fire, emergency medical services, emergency management services, 9-1-1 dispatch) communications, the applicant or the operator shall take all necessary and available commercial measures to immediately cure the default. If the applicant or operator cannot cure the default(s) or resolve the alleged default(s) within the cure period, then applicable county ordinance provisions addressing the resolution of such default(s) shall govern.

XI. FEE SCHEDULE AND PERMITTING PROCESSES

- A. Application Fees.
 - 1. Prior to processing any application for a commercial solar energy facility, the applicant must submit a certified check to the county for the application fee equal to \$1,000.00 per megawatt (mW) of proposed nameplate capacity (including BESS nameplate capacity), up to a maximum fee of \$250,000.00. If the total nameplate capacity is less than 1 mW, the application fee shall be reduced pro rata based on kilowatt (kW) capacity. These funds shall be placed in an FDIC insured account and will be used to cover the county's cost incurred in processing the application.
 - 2. Should the actual costs to the county exceed the submitted application fee, the applicant shall be responsible for those additional costs and shall remit additional funds to the county within 15 days of receipt of a request from the county. No hearings on an application shall be conducted nor final decisions rendered on an application if there are application fees due to the county.
 - 3. Any unused amounts of the application fee shall be refunded to the applicant within six months of the county board rendering a final decision on the matter, unless any pending litigation, disputes or negotiations involving the county exist regarding the commercial solar energy facility, in which case any amounts owed to the applicant shall be refunded within six months of the conclusion of the litigation, disputes or negotiations. An applicant

may request any unused application fee be applied toward the building permit fees for the facility.

B. Building Permit Fees.

Prior to the issuance of building permits, the building permit applicant must deposit a building permit fee equating to \$5,000.00 per megawatt (mW) of nameplate capacity (including BESS nameplate capacity). If the total nameplate capacity is less than 1 mW, the building permit fee shall be reduced pro rata based on kilowatt (kW) capacity.

C. All Costs to be Paid by Applicant or Owner.

In addition to all fees noted above, the applicant or owner shall pay all costs incurred by the county, including but not limited to, those costs associated with all offices, boards and commissions of the county, and third-party costs incurred by the county. This includes, but is not limited to, the direct or indirect costs associated with the hearing, permitting, operations, inspections, decommissioning, litigation, disputes, and/or negotiations.

XII. HEARING FACILITATOR

- A. The county may engage the services of a hearing facilitator. The hearing facilitator shall be an independent contractor who shall conduct a hearing in accordance with all applicable rules of the board and the county but has no adjudicatory responsibility other than ruling on requests for continuances, procedural matters, admissibility of evidence and the propriety of any arguments.
- B. The hearing facilitator shall be an attorney, licensed to practice in the State of Illinois. The applicant shall reimburse the county for the fees and costs charged by the facilitator.

XIII. HEARING FACTORS

- A. The county board may approve a commercial solar energy facility special use permit application, if it finds the evidence complies with state and federal law and regulations, and with the standards of this zoning code including the factors listed below. The factors below are applied as a balancing test, not individual requirements to be met.
 - 1. The establishment, maintenance or operation of the commercial solar energy facility will not be detrimental to or endanger the public health, safety, morals, comfort or general welfare;
 - 2. The commercial solar energy facility will not be injurious to the uses and enjoyment of other property in the immediate vicinity for the purposes already permitted, nor substantially diminish and impair property values of surrounding properties;
 - 3. The establishment of the commercial solar energy facility will not impede the normal and orderly development and improvement of the surrounding properties;

4. Adequate public utilities, access roads, drainage and/or necessary facilities have been or will be provided;
5. Adequate measures have been or will be taken to provide ingress and egress so designed as to minimize traffic congestion in the public streets;
6. The proposed commercial solar energy facility is not contrary to the objectives of the current comprehensive plan of the county (if any); and
7. The commercial solar energy facility shall, in all other respects, conform to the applicable regulations of this ordinance and the zoning district in which it is located (if a zoning ordinance is in effect), except as such regulations may, in each instance, be modified pursuant to the recommendations of and approved by the county board.

B. Special Use Permit Conditions and Restrictions.

The county board may stipulate conditions, guarantees and restrictions, upon the establishment, location, construction, maintenance, and operation of the commercial solar energy facility as are deemed necessary for the protection of the public interest and to secure compliance with the standards and requirements of this ordinance.

C. Revocation.

1. In any case where a special use permit has been approved for a commercial solar energy facility, the applicant shall apply for a commercial solar energy facility building permit from the county and all other permits required by other government or regulatory agencies to commence construction and commence and actively pursue construction of the project within thirty-six (36) months from the date of the granting of the special use permit. If the applicant fails to apply for a commercial solar energy facility building permit from the county and all other permits required by other government or regulatory agencies prior to construction and/or fails to commence and actively pursue construction of the project within the thirty-six (36) month period, then without further action by the county board, the special use permit authorizing the construction and operation of the commercial solar energy facility shall be automatically revoked and void. Upon written request supported by evidence that the applicant has diligently pursued issuance of all necessary government and regulatory permits for the project required to commence construction and that any delay in commencement of construction of the project is due to conditions out of his/her/its control, the county board, in its sole discretion, may extend the above thirty-six (36) month period by passage of an ordinance that amends the special use permit.
2. The special use permit shall be subject to revocation if the applicant dissolves or ceases to do business, abandons the commercial solar energy facility or the commercial solar energy facility ceases to operate for more than twelve (12) consecutive months for any reason.
3. Subject to the provisions of Article X (Remedies), a special use permit may be revoked by the county board if the commercial solar energy facility is not constructed, installed

and/or operated in substantial conformance with the county-approved project plans, the regulations of this ordinance and the stipulated special use permit conditions and restrictions.

D. Transferability; Owner or Commercial Solar Energy Facility Permittee.

The applicant shall provide written notification to the county board at least thirty (30) days prior to any change in ownership of a commercial solar energy facility of any such change in ownership. The phrase "change in ownership of a commercial solar energy facility" includes any kind of assignment, sale, lease, transfer or other conveyance of ownership or operating control of the applicant, the commercial solar energy facility or any portion thereof. The applicant or successors-in-interest or assignees of the special use permit, as applicable, shall remain liable for compliance with all conditions, restrictions and obligations contained in the special use permit, the provisions of this ordinance and applicable county, state, and federal laws.

E. Modification.

Any modification of a commercial solar energy facility that alters or changes the essential character or operation of the commercial solar energy facility in a way not intended at the time the special use permit was granted, or as subsequently amended, shall require a new special use permit. The applicant or authorized representative shall apply for an amended special use permit prior to any modification of the commercial solar energy facility.

F. Permit Effective Date.

The special use permit shall become effective upon approval of the ordinance by the county board.

XIV. INTERPRETATION

The provisions of these regulations shall be held to the minimum requirements adopted for the promotion and preservation of public health, safety, and general welfare of Mason County. These regulations are not intended to repeal, abrogate, annul or in any manner interfere with existing regulations or laws of the Mason County nor conflict with any statutes of the State of Illinois.

XV. SEVERABILITY

If any section, paragraph, clause, phrase, or part of this ordinance is for any reason held invalid by any court or competent jurisdiction, such decision shall not affect the validity of the remaining provisions of these regulations.

XVI. EFFECTIVE DATE

This ordinance shall be in full force and effect from and after its passage, publication, and approval as required by law.