

RESOLUTION NO. 2026- 56
MASON COUNTY, ILLINOIS

RESOLUTION APPROVING A TEXT AMENDMENT TO THE MASON COUNTY ZONING CODE
REGARDING COMMERCIAL SOLAR ENERGY FACILITIES (CSEF)

WHEREAS, the County previously adopted as part of the Mason County Zoning Code, an ordinance regulating the siting and development of commercial solar energy facilities within the County; and

WHEREAS, on October 30, 2025, the Illinois General Assembly passed legislation amending Section 5-12020 of the Illinois Counties Code (55 ILCS 5/5-12020), which governs local regulation of commercial solar energy facilities by Illinois counties, and on January 8, 2026, Governor Pritzker signed said legislation into law;

WHEREAS, the County has an interest in complying with statutory law and ensuring the continued protection of the health, safety, and welfare of its citizens;

WHEREAS, following public hearing, the Zoning Board of Appeals recommended the County Board adopt the proposed text amendment, attached hereto as Exhibit A.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, following review, consideration and discussion, that the County Board hereby approves the proposed text amendment, which may be referred to as the "Commercial Solar Energy Facilities Ordinance" of Mason County, as more fully set forth in Exhibit A.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the County Board hereby repeals any prior ordinance pertaining to these subjects and hereby instructs the Zoning Office of the County to publish the adopted ordinance in accordance with law and make said ordinance available to the general public for inspection.

Passed and adopted by the County Board of Mason County, Illinois this 14th day of July 2026, by a vote of 7 ayes, 0 nays, and 0 absent.

Kenneth Walker
CHAIR, MASON COUNTY BOARD

ATTEST:

Summer R. Brown
CLERK OF MASON COUNTY, ILLINOIS
(SEAL)

EXHIBIT A

**MASON COUNTY, ILLINOIS
COMMERCIAL SOLAR ENERGY FACILITIES ORDINANCE**

Adopted by the Mason County Board July 14, 2026

Ordinance No. 2026-56

Published in pamphlet form by the authority of Mason County, Illinois,

this 14 day of July, 2026

**MASON COUNTY, ILLINOIS
COMMERCIAL SOLAR ENERGY FACILITIES ORDINANCE**

I. DEFINITIONS.

- A. "Applicant" means the entity who submits to the county a special use permit application for a commercial solar energy facility. All references to "applicant" in this ordinance shall include and apply to the applicant and applicant's successors-in-interest and assigns; the facility owner and facility owner's successors-in-interest and assigns; and the operator and operator's successors-in-interest and assigns.
- B. "Commercial operation date" means the calendar date on which the commercial solar energy facility produces power for commercial sale, not including test power.
- C. "Commercial solar energy facility" means a "commercial solar energy system" as defined in Section 10-720 of the Illinois Property Tax Code (35 ILCS 200/10-720), which is defined as "any device or assembly of devices that (i) is ground installed and (ii) 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 on which the device or devices reside."
- D. "Facility owner" means (i) a person with a direct ownership interest in a commercial solar energy facility, regardless of whether the person is involved in acquiring the necessary rights, permits, and approvals or otherwise planning for the construction and operation of the facility, and (ii) a person who, at the time the facility is being developed, is acting as a developer of the facility by acquiring the necessary rights, permits, and approvals or by planning for the construction and operation of the facility, regardless of whether the person will own or operate the facility.
- E. "Financial assurance" 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.
- F. "Nonparticipating property" means real property that is not a participating property.
- G. "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 for the commercial solar energy facility is filed with the county.
- H. "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 for the commercial solar energy facility is filed with the county: a school, place of worship, day care facility, public library, or community center.
- I. "Operator" means the person or entity responsible for the day-to-day operation and maintenance of the commercial solar energy facility, including any third-party subcontractors, successors-in-interest and assigns.

- J. "Participating property" means real property that is the subject of a written agreement between a facility owner and the property 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 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 or supporting facilities.
- K. "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 for the commercial solar energy facility is filed with the county.
- L. "Professional engineer" means a qualified individual who is licensed as a professional engineer in the State of Illinois.
- M. "Project" means the commercial solar energy facility and supporting facilities.
- N. "Protected lands" means real property that is: (1) subject to a permanent conservation right consistent with the Illinois Real Property Conservation Rights Act (765 ILCS 120/1 et seq.); or (2) 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.).
- O. "Supporting facilities" means the transmission lines, substations, access roads, meteorological towers, storage containers, and equipment associated with the generation and storage of electricity by the commercial solar energy facility. "Supporting facilities" includes energy storage systems capable of absorbing energy and storing it for use at a later time, including, but not limited to, batteries and other electrochemical and electromechanical technologies or systems.

II. APPLICABILITY.

This ordinance governs commercial solar energy facilities (including supporting facilities) within the county that generate electricity to be sold to wholesale or retail markets. This ordinance shall apply to the unincorporated areas of the county that are outside of the zoning jurisdiction of a municipality.

III. PROHIBITION.

No commercial solar energy facility or supporting facilities governed by this ordinance shall be constructed, erected, installed, or located within the county without a special use permit and building permit granted by the county. Commercial solar energy facilities and supporting facilities are only allowed by special use permit and building permit upon agricultural or industrial zoned properties. Unless otherwise allowed by the county, all projects shall conform to the representations made within the special use permit application, representations during the public hearing process, and representations contained within the building permit application.

IV. SOLICITATION.

Prior to contacting any property owner or property owner's representative, any person intending to solicit a property owner in person for the lease, purchase, or use of property in relation to any portion of a commercial solar energy facility, including supporting facilities, must submit to the county sheriff's office an application for a solicitor permit with an application processing fee in the amount of \$100 and must submit to a criminal background check. A solicitor permit shall only be issued upon approval by the county zoning administrator and upon payment of a solicitor permit fee in the amount of \$1,000. A solicitor permit shall be valid for one calendar year from the date of issuance and shall not be transferable to any other person.

V. COMMUNITY MEETING.

At least 30 days but not more than 60 days prior to the filing of a special use permit application with the county, the applicant shall hold at least one community meeting, open to the public, at a location within the township of the proposed project, or if no location is available within the township, a location within the county, for purposes of informing the public of the proposed project. Notice of the public community meeting shall be mailed to all property owners and residents within 1.5 miles of the project footprint, and advertisement of the public community meeting shall be published in local newspapers. Such notices and advertisements shall reference where additional information may be obtained regarding the proposed project.

VI. SPECIAL USE PERMIT APPLICATION.

- A. To obtain a special use permit for a commercial solar energy facility and its supporting facilities, the applicant must submit a special use permit application to the county for review of completeness and scheduling of a public hearing on the application.
- B. Material changes to the special use permit application are not permitted once notice of public hearing on the application has been published, unless otherwise requested or permitted by the county.
- C. The applicant shall submit at least 10 copies of the special use permit application to the county, and at least one copy in electronic format, unless otherwise requested or permitted by the county.
- D. The special use permit application submitted to the county shall contain the following:
 - 1. A project summary for the commercial solar energy facility and its supporting facilities, including:
 - a. A general description of the project, including:
 - i. Approximate overall nameplate generating capacity;
 - ii. Potential equipment manufacturers of the solar panels, racking and any energy storage system equipment;
 - iii. Number of solar panels and nameplate generating capacity of each;
 - iv. Maximum height of the solar panels at full tilt;
 - v. Description of supporting facilities, including energy storage systems (if any);

- vi. Energy storage system nameplate capacity, overall acreage, and types of energy systems to be utilized (if any);
 - vii. Project site plan, phasing plan, construction timeline; and
 - viii. General location of the project; and
 - b. A description of the applicant, facility owner, and operator, including their respective business structures;
2. The name, address, and phone number of the applicant, facility owner, operator, participating property owners, and documentation demonstrating land ownership or legal control of the property;
 3. A site plan for the project showing the planned location of each solar array including parcel number and 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, all supporting facilities including any energy storage systems, substations, operations and maintenance buildings, temporary and permanent meteorological towers (if any), concrete batch plants, laydown yards, electrical cabling from the solar array to the substations, ancillary equipment, any utility poles within the project or leading to third party transmission lines or substation, the location of any wetlands, flood plain, drainage structures (including surface ditches and subsurface drainage lines), underground mines, scenic and natural areas within 1,500 feet of the project, the location of all known communications towers within one mile of the project, and the layout of all structures within the geographical boundaries of setbacks;
 4. A topographic map depicting the project site and surrounding area;
 5. A proposed decommissioning plan for the project, including cost estimations and a draft form of financial assurance;
 6. Written approval from relevant road authorities of the roads to be utilized for construction and a draft form of financial assurance for the protection of said roads;
 7. Sound modeling for all potential equipment manufacturers (including solar panels, inverters and energy storage systems) showing the sound emissions, the relevant Illinois Pollution Control Board (IPCB) standards, the impact upon all affected properties, and all supporting data;
 8. An "Agricultural Impact Mitigation Agreement" (AIMA) executed between the facility owner and the Illinois Department of Agriculture (IDOA);
 9. Waivers from any setback requirements executed by occupied community building owners, nonparticipating property owners, and/or nonparticipating residence owners bearing a file stamp from the county recorder confirming that the waiver was recorded against the title to the affected real property;

10. Waivers from any noise enforcement executed by participating property owners, participating residence owners, nonparticipating property owners and/or nonparticipating residence owners bearing a file stamp confirming that the waiver was recorded against the title to the affected real property. The waiver must reflect the amount of overage to be reasonably expected by the operation of the project;
11. Results and recommendations from consultation with the Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) obtained through its Ecological Compliance Assessment Tool (EcoCAT) or a comparable successor tool;
12. Results and recommendations from consultation with the Illinois State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) regarding potential impacts on State-registered historic sites under the Illinois State Agency Historic Resources Preservation Act (20 ILCS 3420/1 et seq.);
13. Evidence demonstrating that the project will avoid protected lands as identified by the Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) and the Illinois Nature Preserves Commission (INPC);
14. A farmland drainage plan (to include a drain tile survey) which shall be provided to the county and any impacted drainage district;
15. Adequate proof that the special use permit application was submitted to local emergency response agencies;
16. A proposed vegetative screening plan and vegetation/weed management plan;
17. A proposed grading plan if any grading will be necessary for the construction of the project;
18. A copy of all communication and interference studies demonstrating the potential impacts of the project on television, radio, telephone (including mobile phone communications), transportation communication devices, emergency and law enforcement communications including E911 communications, and weather radar utilized by the National Weather Service or others to communicate weather events to the public;
19. All information required under Section 5-12024 of the Illinois Counties Code (55 ILCS 5/5-12024) for any energy storage systems utilized for the project;
20. Sufficient documentation showing that at least one community meeting, open to the public, was held at least 30 days but not more than 60 days prior to the submission of the special use permit application, and that all property owners and residents within 1.5 miles of the project footprint received notice and local newspaper publication was made in accordance with this ordinance;

21. All other required studies, reports, certifications, and approvals necessary for demonstrating compliance with the provisions of this ordinance;
22. Any other information requested by the county or its consultants necessary to evaluate the special use permit application and to demonstrate that the project meets the provisions of this ordinance; and
23. Any other information normally required by, or reasonably requested by, the county as part of its permitting requirements for buildings or other structures.

VII. DESIGN AND INSTALLATION.

A. Design Safety Certification.

The project shall conform to applicable industry standards, including those of the American National Standards Institute (ANSI) (most recent edition), National Electric Code (NEC) (most recent edition) and requirements of the public utility. Prior to the issuance of a building permit, applicant shall submit certificates of design compliance from equipment manufacturers obtained from Underwriters Laboratories (UL), Det Norske Veritas (DNV), Germanischer Lloyd (GL), or an equivalent third party. The project shall consist of new equipment and no used or experimental equipment shall be used in the project without approval by the county.

B. Aesthetics and Lighting.

1. *Design and Consistency:* All solar panels shall be of similar design, size, and height; rotate in the same direction; shall be consistent in color and direction with nearby facilities; and shall be designed and installed in order to prevent glare toward any inhabited buildings on adjacent properties as well as adjacent rights-of-way.
2. *Lighting:* All projects shall comply with responsible outdoor lighting provided by the International Dark-Sky Association and shall limit outdoor lighting to that which is minimally required for safety and operational purposes. Any outdoor lighting shall be reasonably shielded and downcast from all residences and adjacent properties.
3. *Intra-Project Power and Communication Lines:* All power lines used to collect power from solar panels 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.
4. *Debris and Garbage:* The project area shall be kept free of debris and garbage at all times during the life of the project, including those areas outside the fencing of the project.
5. *Vegetative Screening:* The project shall provide vegetative screening to shield nonparticipating residences. The vegetative screening shall be at least five feet in

height at the commercial operation date. A vegetative screening plan must be submitted with the special use permit application, and may be subject to revision, review and approval prior to the issuance of a building permit. The screening requirement for vegetative screening may be waived by the written consent of the respective property owner. Waivers shall be provided with the special use application.

6. *Vegetation/Weed Management*: The project shall perform an assessment of the property for the presence of noxious weeds, 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 or 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.). Such assessment shall include the presence and propensity for such weeds to exist within the project area and a plan for eradication and management of such weeds. A vegetation/weed management plan must be submitted as part of the special use permit application and may be subject to revision, review and approval prior to the issuance of a building permit.
7. *Fencing*: The project shall be enclosed by fencing having a height of at least six feet and no more than 25 feet.

C. Warnings.

1. A visible warning sign concerning voltage must be placed at all entrances, at all transformers and inverters, substations, and other locations where high voltage is present and is reasonably accessible by others.
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 15 feet from the ground.

D. Setback Requirements.

1. Commercial solar energy facilities (and all supporting facilities) shall be setback with the setback distances measured from the nearest edge of any above-ground component of the facility, excluding fencing:
 - a. *Occupied Community Buildings and Dwellings on Nonparticipating Property*: 150 feet to the nearest point on the outside wall of the structure.
 - b. *Boundary Lines of Participating Property*: None.
 - c. *Boundary Lines of Nonparticipating Property*: 50 feet to the nearest point on the property line of the nonparticipating property.
 - d. *Public Road Rights-of-Way*: 50 feet to the nearest edge of the public right-of-way.

2. Setback requirements for fencing in relation to public rights-of-way shall be those set forth for agricultural/industrial districts by the county's general zoning code.
3. Setback requirements may be waived by the written consent of the property owner of each affected nonparticipating property. Any waiver of the above setback requirements shall run with the land and shall be recorded with the county recorder prior to the issuance of any building permit for project.

E. Compliance with Additional Regulations.

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

F. Use of Public Roads.

1. An applicant proposing to use any county, municipality, township or village roads, for the purpose of transporting commercial solar energy facility or supporting facility equipment for construction, operation, or maintenance shall:
 - a. Identify all such public roads; and
 - b. Conduct a preconstruction baseline survey to determine existing road conditions for assessing potential future damage.
2. Enter into a road use agreement with the county and each affected Road District that includes the following provisions, at a minimum:
 - a. Project layout map;
 - b. Transportation impact analysis;
 - c. Notification procedures for road closures and/or lane restrictions;
 - d. Preconstruction plans;
 - e. Project traffic map;
 - f. Project scope of repairs;
 - g. Post-construction repairs;
 - h. Insurance; and
 - i. Financial assurance in forms and amounts acceptable to the county.
3. The road use agreement shall require applicant to be responsible for the reasonable cost of improving roads used to construct the project and the cost of repairing roads used by the facility owner during construction of the project. Roadways improved in preparation for and during the construction of the project shall be repaired and restored to the improved condition at the cost of the developer if the roadways have degraded or were damaged as a result of construction-related activities.
4. All repairs and improvements to county 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 county public roads and highways, must be approved by the county board prior to the approval of any building permit applications related to the construction of the proposed project. Copies of any other road use agreements for the project must also be provided to the county zoning administrator prior to the approval of any building permit applications.

G. Site Assessment.

To ensure that the subsurface conditions of the site will provide proper support for the project and soil restoration, the applicant, at its expense, shall provide soil and geotechnical boring reports to the county with respect to each solar array and any energy storage system equipment, as part of its building permit application. The applicant shall follow the guidelines for conservation practices impact mitigation submitted by the county's soil and water conservation district (or equivalent regulatory agency). The applicant shall submit grading plans for the project for review and comment by the county's soil and water conservation district (or equivalent regulatory agency) and shall submit said plans to the county prior to the issuance of any building permit.

H. Communications Analysis; Interference.

1. The applicant shall, at its own expense, retain a third-party qualified professional to conduct a television reception analysis within a 1.5-mile radius of the project footprint. The analysis shall document all television stations received in the area and shall serve as the baseline conditions prior to construction. This study shall be submitted as part of the special use permit application for the project.
2. The applicant shall, at its own expense, retain a qualified third-party professional to conduct a communications study demonstrating that E911, other emergency communications, and official county or municipal communications will not be negatively impacted by the project. This study shall be submitted as part of the special use permit application for the project.
3. The facility owner/operator shall, at its own expense, immediately mitigate and eliminate any interference the project causes with electromagnetic communications, including radio, telephone, microwave, or television signals, especially those affecting government public safety communications (police, fire, emergency management services, and 911 dispatch).
 - a. The applicant shall provide microwave transmission providers and local emergency service providers with a copy of the project summary and site plan. If these providers demonstrate a likelihood of interference, the facility owner/operator shall take all necessary measures to minimize and mitigate the anticipated interference. For any interference affecting public safety communications, the facility owner/operator shall immediately implement all necessary and commercially available measures to eliminate the interference.

- b. If the facility owner/operator receives a written interference complaint after construction, it shall respond immediately. For public safety communications complaints, the facility owner/operator must immediately take all necessary and commercially available steps to eliminate the interference.
4. If, after construction of the project, the facility owner/operator receives a written complaint related to interference with local residential television or radio reception, the facility owner/operator shall take commercially reasonable steps to investigate and respond. A summary of the complaint and subsequent response from the facility owner/operator shall be forwarded to the county for review. The facility owner/operator shall have 30 calendar days to verify the complaint, and 15 calendar days to respond. Said response shall be addressed and forwarded to both the county and the complainant. Such response shall include, but not be limited to, an acknowledgment that a complaint was made and evaluated by the facility owner/operator; and if considered valid by the facility owner/operator, an explanation, including a timeline, as to how the facility owner/operator will resolve the complaint. In no event shall valid television reception issues persist beyond 60 calendar days from the date the complaint is validated. If considered invalid by the facility owner/operator, an explanation, including supporting documentation and expert opinions as to why the facility owner/operator believes the complaint is not valid shall be provided to the county and the complainant.

I. Noise Levels.

Noise levels from the project shall comply with applicable Illinois Pollution Control Board (IPCB) regulations. The applicant shall submit manufacturer sound power level characteristics and other relevant data for all project equipment 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. Any waivers as to noise shall be provided in the special use permit application, and any waivers as to noise obtained after the filing of the special use permit application shall be provided to the county prior to the issuance of a building permit. Any such waivers shall reflect the amount of overage modeled for the operation of the project and shall be recorded with the county recorder.

J. Agricultural Impact Mitigation.

Pursuant to the Illinois Renewable Energy Facilities Agricultural Impact Mitigation Act (505 ILCS 147/15), the facility owner shall enter into an "Agricultural Impact Mitigation Agreement" (AIMA) with the Illinois Department of Agriculture (IDOA). 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. The applicant shall submit a copy of the fully executed AIMA to the county as part of its special use permit application.

K. Avian and Wildlife Impact Study.

The applicant, at its expense, shall have a third-party, qualified professional conduct an avian and wildlife impact study and submit said study to the county as part of the special use permit application. The project shall be located, designed, constructed, and operated so as to avoid and if necessary, mitigate, impacts to wildlife.

L. As-Built Map and Plans.

Within 60 calendar days of completion of construction of the project, the facility owner or operator shall deliver to the county "as-built" maps, a final site plan and engineering plans that have been signed and stamped by a professional engineer and surveyor licensed in the State of Illinois.

M. Engineer's Certificate.

Prior to the issuance of a building permit, applicant must submit a certification from a structural engineer registered in the State of Illinois that the project design is compatible with and appropriate given the specific soil, subsurface and climate conditions. The structural engineer's certificate shall be submitted as part of the building permit application.

N. Conformance with Approved Application and Plans.

The facility owner/operator shall construct and operate the project in conformance with the special use permit and any conditions, building permit requirements, this ordinance and all applicable state, federal and local laws, regulations, and permits.

O. Additional Terms and Conditions.

1. All technical submissions, as defined by the Illinois Professional Engineering Practice Act of 1989 (225 ILCS 325/1 et seq.), contained in the special use permit application and the building permit application shall be prepared and signed by a professional engineer for the relevant discipline.
2. The county may retain a qualified, independent code inspector or professional engineer both to make inspections of the project during and after construction and to consult with the county to confirm that the construction, substantial repair, replacement, repowering and/or decommissioning of the project is performed in compliance with applicable ordinance, conditions, electrical and building codes, state and federal law and regulation. The costs and fees so incurred by the county in retaining said inspector or engineer shall be promptly reimbursed by the facility owner/operator.
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 of approval are held invalid, such invalidity shall not affect any other provision of this ordinance or conditions that can be given effect without the invalid provision and, to this end, the provisions in this ordinance and any conditions are severable.

VIII. OPERATION.

A. Maintenance.

1. *Annual Report:* The facility owner must submit, on an annual basis on or before February 1st of each calendar year following its commercial operation date, a report to the county zoning administrator containing the following information: (i) a general description of any physical repairs, replacements, or modifications to the project; (ii) complaints pertaining to setbacks, noise, appearance, safety, lighting and use of any public roads received by the facility owner concerning the project and the resolution of such complaints; (iii) calls for emergency services; (iv) a general summary of service calls to the project; (v) latest certificates of insurance; (vi) contact information (names, email address and phone numbers) for the person(s) with general oversight of the facility including emergency response; and (vii) overall and per panel generation of electricity provided in kilowatts and listed by monthly output. In addition to the annual report, such information shall be provided upon direct request by the county. Failure to provide the annual report or report directly as requested by the county (within 30 days) shall be considered a material violation of this ordinance and subject to the remedies provision of this ordinance. Whenever the person(s) with oversight or emergency responsibilities changes or said person(s) contact information changes, the facility owner shall provide updated information to the county within seven calendar days.
2. *Modifications:* Any modification to an existing project that is not considered a repower under this ordinance, or a project that has received a special use permit that has not yet received a building permit, which increases the sound impacts to nonparticipating properties or nonparticipating residences, shall submit to the county an application for an amendment to the special use permit which shall be subject to a public hearing and all procedural requirements of a special use permit request under the Illinois Counties Code.
3. *Repower:* Any modifications to an existing project that increases the nameplate capacity or adds additional properties or parcels shall require the submission of a new special use permit application and be subject to a public hearing and all procedural requirements of a special use permit request under the Illinois Counties Code. If a special use permit is granted upon such a request, the project shall be considered a new facility and begin a new the valuation of the project for property tax purposes.
4. *Equipment Upgrades:* Any replacement of existing equipment with substantially similar equipment which is not considered a modification or a repower under this ordinance shall require the issuance of a new building permit through the county zoning office but shall not require an amendment to a previously existing special use permit or a new special use permit. Based on the county's discretion, such equipment upgrades may require additional agreements with the county, including but not limited to, a new road use agreement. Replacement of damaged solar panels is not considered an "equipment upgrade" and shall not require a new special use permit.

B. Emergency Response.

1. The applicant shall submit to all local emergency responders a copy of the site plan and standard operating procedures and guidelines for the project so that the local law enforcement, fire department/fire protection district and rescue units, emergency medical service providers and emergency management service providers having jurisdiction over the project may evaluate and coordinate emergency response plans with the applicant. Such materials shall be provided prior to the filing of the special use permit application.
2. The facility owner, at its own 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 project.
3. The facility owner and operator shall cooperate with all local emergency responders to develop an emergency response plan. The emergency response plan(s) shall be approved by the county board prior to the issuance of a building permit. The emergency response plan(s) shall include, at a minimum, 24-hour contact information (names, titles, email addresses, cell phone numbers) for the facility owner and the operator, at least three designated facility representatives (a primary representative with two alternate representatives, that are on-call 24 hours per day/7 days per week/365 days per year. Any change in the designated facility representatives and/or contact information shall be promptly communicated to the county zoning administrator. The content of the emergency response plan, including the 24-hour contact information, shall be reviewed and updated on an annual basis.
4. Any portion of a commercial solar energy facility or supporting facilities that experiences a fire or weather impact/damage shall be immediately addressed by the facility owner and operator in coordination with all fire departments/fire protection districts and any other emergency response agencies within the project footprint. The facility owner shall notify the county zoning administrator within 24 hours of any fire incident or weather impact/damage and shall provide to the county zoning administrator within seven days the following information: (1) extent of damage and whether the fire or weather impact/damage resulted in any portion of the project becoming inoperable (including any solar arrays or supporting facilities); (2) the estimated time for repair; (3) whether overweight or oversize vehicles will need to utilize public roads for repair of any damaged equipment; and (4) the point of contact for the facility owner regarding the emergency and repairs, and point of contact for any contractor(s) performing the repairs.
5. Nothing in this ordinance shall alleviate the need to comply with all other applicable life, health, safety, fire and 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 project shall be removed from the site promptly and disposed of in accordance with all federal, state and local laws and regulations.
2. All hazardous materials related to the construction, operation and maintenance of the project shall be handled, stored, transported and disposed of in accordance with all applicable federal, state and local laws and regulations.
3. The project shall comply with existing septic and well regulations as required by the county health department and the Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH).

D. Drainage Systems.

The applicant, at its expense, shall 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/or operation of the project in accordance with the "Agricultural Impact Mitigation Agreement" (AIMA), the Illinois Drainage Code (70 ILCS 605/1 et seq.) and any agreements related to drainage.

E. Complaint Resolution.

The facility owner shall, at its expense and in coordination with the county, develop a system for logging and investigating complaints related to the project. The facility owner shall resolve such non-emergency complaints on a case-by-case basis and shall provide written confirmation to the county. All costs and fees incurred by the county in attempting to or resolving complaints shall be reimbursed by the facility owner. The facility owner and operator shall also designate and maintain for the duration of the project a telephone number and email address as its public information/inquiry/complaint hotline which shall be answered by a customer service representative on a 24/7 basis. The facility owner and operator shall post the telephone number and email address for the customer service representative in a prominent, easy to find location on their websites and at the project site on signage.

IX. **LIABILITY INSURANCE AND INDEMNIFICATION.**

- A. Commencing with the issuance of a building permit, the facility owner shall maintain a current general comprehensive liability policy, pollution liability and automobile liability coverage covering bodily injury, death and illness, and property damage, with limits of at least \$10,000,000 per occurrence and \$20,000,000 in the aggregate, during the life of the project. All insurance policies shall be in the name of the facility owner. The original certificate of insurance shall be provided to the county zoning administrator upon prior to the issuance of a building permit, and at each subsequent renewal, at least annually thereafter. Additionally, the facility owner shall promptly increase policy limits if the amount required under this ordinance is increased, upon written notice from the county, and the facility owner shall thereafter provide proof of the increased policy to the county zoning administrator.
- B. The facility owner and operator 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 and affiliated equipment 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 facility owner and/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 or immunities available under the law.

X. DECOMMISSIONING AND SITE RECLAMATION PLAN.

- A. Applicant must submit a decommissioning plan with cost estimation to the county as part of the special use permit application and shall provide testimony supporting the calculation of costs during the public hearing on the special use permit application. Salvage value shall not be considered for purposes of cost estimation.
- B. Prior to receiving any building permit for the project, the facility owner shall enter into a decommissioning agreement with the county to be approved by the county board.
- C. The facility owner shall submit an updated decommissioning plan with updated cost estimation and updated financial assurance in accordance with the schedule agreed upon with the county.
- D. The county may utilize a third-party engineer and/or counsel to review any decommissioning plan and cost estimation prior to approval of the decommissioning agreement/plan and financial assurance. Costs incurred for the same shall be paid by the applicant or facility owner.

XI. DEFAULTS AND REMEDIES.

- A. Any commercial solar energy facility declared to be unsafe by the county by reason of inadequate maintenance, dilapidation, obsolescence, fire hazard, damage, or abandonment is hereby declared a public safety issue and shall be abated by repair, rehabilitation, demolition, or removal in accordance with the procedures set forth in this ordinance and decommissioning agreement or plan.
- B. Failure by the applicant, facility owner, or operator to comply with any provisions of this ordinance, provisions under the special use permit, other permits, any conditions imposed on the project, and/or failure to comply with any law or regulation shall constitute a default under this ordinance and shall be grounds for revocation of any special use permit or other permits granted by the county board or the county.
- C. Prior to implementation of the existing county procedures for the resolution of such default(s), the appropriate county body shall first provide written notice to the facility owner and operator, setting forth the alleged default(s). Such written notice shall provide the facility

owner and operator a reasonable time period, not to exceed 30 days, for good faith negotiations to resolve the alleged default(s).

- D. If the county determines that the parties cannot resolve the alleged defaults within the good faith negotiation period, the county shall make application to the circuit court for an injunction requiring conformance with this ordinance or make such other order as the court deems necessary to secure compliance with the ordinance.
- E. Any violation of this ordinance shall be an offense punishable by a fine of \$1,000. Each violation shall be a separate offense. Each day a violation occurs or continues shall be a separate offense, subject to a \$1,000 fine for each additional day the violation is not corrected. A court may impose any additional and appropriate per day fine for each day the violation exists or until such violation is remedied, and the court may consider the nature of the violation, the degree of public safety involved, and the efforts of the county, the applicant, facility owner, and/or operator to resolve quickly and safely any and all violations. It is the intent that any dispute between the parties be resolved promptly, and where possible, by informal discussions with the county, as may be outlined elsewhere in this ordinance.
- F. After the effective date of this ordinance, any person/entity who proceeds with the development of a commercial solar energy facility and/or its supporting facilities located within the territorial jurisdiction of this ordinance, prior to obtaining all approvals under the terms of this ordinance, shall be deemed in violation of this ordinance and shall be fined as stated herein.
- G. The county reserves the right to hire outside counsel to enforce this ordinance and/or determine compliance with this ordinance. The applicant, facility owner, and/or operator is liable for payment of reasonable attorney's fees in this regard.
- H. Nothing herein shall prevent the county from taking such other lawful action to prevent or remedy violations. All costs connected therewith shall accrue to the applicant, facility owner, and/or operator responsible for the project.

XII. FEE SCHEDULE AND PERMITTING PROCESSES.

A. Special Use Permit Application Fees.

- 1. Prior to processing any special use permit application for a commercial solar energy facility and supporting facilities, the applicant must submit payment to the county equal to \$5,000 per megawatt of nameplate capacity, up to a maximum fee of \$125,000. Nameplate capacity shall include any energy storage system capacity. Nameplate capacity shall be calculated in terms of direct current nameplate capacity.
- 2. Should the actual costs to the county exceed the special use permit application fee paid, 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 decisions rendered on any items related to the special use or decisions on any agreements with the county if outstanding fees remain due to the county.

B. Building Permit Application Fees.

1. Prior to the issuance of a building permit, the facility owner must deposit a building permit fee equating to \$5,000 per megawatt of nameplate capacity, up to a maximum fee of \$75,000. Nameplate capacity shall include any energy storage system capacity. Nameplate capacity shall be calculated in terms of direct current nameplate capacity.
2. Should the actual costs to the county exceed the building permit application fee paid, the applicant shall be responsible for the additional costs and shall remit additional funds to the county within 15 days of receipt of a request from the county. No building permit shall be issued upon outstanding fees remaining due to the county. Costs may include but are not limited to the cost for outside consultants to review and advise to the county as to review of the building permit application.

C. All Costs Paid by Applicant/Facility Owner/Operator.

1. The applicant, facility owner, and/or operator shall pay all costs incurred by the county, those costs associated with all offices, boards and commissions of the county, and third-party costs incurred by the county, including but not limited to, direct or indirect costs associated with the hearing, permitting, operations, inspections, decommissioning, litigation, disputes, and/or negotiations.
2. Any costs that remain unpaid after 30 days following a request for payment from the county shall be subject to any and all available remedies including fines or revocation of any previously issued permit.

XIII. 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 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.

XIV. HEARING FACTORS.

The county board may approve a special use permit application for a commercial solar energy facility and its supporting facilities if it finds the evidence complies with state, federal and local law and regulations, and with the standards of this ordinance including the factors listed below. The factors listed below shall be applied as a balancing test rather than individual requirements to be met. All of the following factors shall be considered unless prohibited by law at the time county board renders its decision on the special use permit application.

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 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 will, in all other respects, conform to the applicable regulations of this ordinance and the zoning district in which it is located, except as such regulations may, in each instance, be modified pursuant to the recommendations of and as approved by the county board.

XV. SPECIAL USE PERMIT CONDITIONS AND RESTRICTIONS.

A. Conditions.

As part of its approval of a special use permit for a commercial solar energy facility, the county board may stipulate conditions, guarantees, and restrictions upon the establishment, location, construction, maintenance, and operation of the facility as deemed necessary for the protection of the public interest and to secure compliance with the standards and requirements of this ordinance.

B. 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 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 facility within five years from the date of the granting of the special use permit. If the applicant fails to apply for a 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 facility within this five-year period, then without further action by the county, the special use permit for the facility shall be automatically terminated, revoked and void. Upon written request supported by evidence that the applicant has diligently pursued issuance of all necessary permits

for the facility required to commence construction and that any delay in commencement of construction of the facility is due to conditions out of its control, the county may allow for a reasonable extension of time.

2. A special use permit shall be automatically terminated, revoked and void if the applicant dissolves or ceases to do business, abandons the facility, or the facility ceases to operate for more than 12 consecutive months.
3. A special use permit may be revoked by the county if the facility is not constructed, installed and/or operated in substantial conformance with the county-approved plans, the regulations of this ordinance and the special use permit, conditions and restrictions, or failure to comply with any county, state or federal permits, laws or regulations.

C. Transferability.

The facility owner shall provide written notification to the county at least 30 days prior to a change in ownership of the project. A change in ownership shall include any assignment, sale, lease, transfer or other conveyance of ownership or operating control of the project or any portion thereof. The facility owner, successors-in-interest, and 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 and any conditions, building permits, the provisions of this ordinance and applicable county, state and federal permits, laws and regulations.

D. Special Use Permit Effective Date and Expiration.

A special use permit granted under this ordinance shall become effective upon the date of approval of the special use permit by the county board. The special use permit shall automatically terminate 30 years after the issuance of a building permit, unless otherwise limited or extended by condition or resolution of the county board.

XVI. SEVERABILITY.

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

XVII. EFFECTIVE DATE.

This ordinance shall be in full force and effect from and after its passage, publication and approval as required by law, and all prior ordinances pertaining to the subjects of this ordinance shall be deemed repealed from and after the effective date of this ordinance.

MASON COUNTY, ILLINOIS
COMMERCIAL SOLAR ENERGY FACILITIES ORDINANCE

I move for the adoption of the foregoing Ordinance.

Dorothy Kreling
Member, Mason County Board

I second the motion for the adoption of the foregoing Ordinance.

Brendaavenport Fournell
Member, Mason County Board

PASSED this 14th day of July, 2026

Kenneth Cook
Dorothy Kreling
CHAIR, MASON COUNTY BOARD

ATTEST:

Summer Brown
CLERK OF MASON COUNTY, ILLINOIS
(SEAL)