

SECTION 4.17 SOLAR PANELS (AND THE LIKE)

The use of solar panels (and the like) for private use may be permitted by right in all zoning districts provided the panels comply with the following requirements.

NOTE: Free standing solar panels that exceed the number listed below as well as the development of solar farms shall only be permissible in the AG zoning district subject to special land use approval – See Section 4.13, T.

- A. Freestanding Panels (for private use)
 - 1. Free standing solar panels may be permitted to be located on a parcel as an accessory structure and the area of the panels shall comply with the maximum limit for all accessory structures allowed. Freestanding arrays which together with all other accessory buildings on a parcel exceed the maximum area allotted are only permitted in the AG zoning districts by special land use.
 - 2. Freestanding solar panels shall conform to the regulations for accessory buildings as to maximum lot cover and setbacks for the zoning district in which located.
 - 3. All freestanding solar panels shall be regulated as an accessory structure and shall meet all applicable accessory building requirements of the ordinance.
 - 4. No freestanding solar panel shall be permitted to exceed a height of fifteen (15) feet.
- B. Roof or Structural Mounted Panels including solar shingles (for private use)
 - 1. Shall not project more than two (2) feet above the roof line. However, the solar panel when installed shall not exceed the maximum height allowed in the Zoning District. The use of flat mount solar panels or solar shingles is preferred;
 - 2. May be constructed on any roof surface of an existing structure.
 - 3. Shall not be located within three (3) feet of any peak, eave or valley to maintain adequate accessibility.
 - 4. When attached flat to a roof or siding, solar panels shall not be considered an accessory structure.
- C. Requirements for Non-commercial solar generators
 - 1. The Fire Department shall be notified of the location and other pertinent information whenever solar panels or other types of solar generators are installed upon a property
 - 2. The solar generator shall be fitted with a warning notice at the meter and an automatic shut off or breaker switch as required by the State Fire Code.
 - 3. The applicant shall supply the Fire Department with information on the type of system that the solar generator is a part of, either photovoltaic or thermal.
 - 4. All panels shall have tempered, non-reflective surfaces.
 - 5. It shall be shown that all panels are adequately secured to the surface upon which they are mounted and that the mounting structure has the capability of supporting the panels.

¹ F:\zoning SOLAR FARM text SECTION 4.doc

6. The installation of the panels shall not require or be reliant on the clear cutting of trees or other vegetation.
 7. The installation of any solar panel shall not negatively impact adjacent properties with additional or excessive storm water runoff and/or drainage.
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SECTION 4.13 SPECIAL USE CONDITIONS

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- T. **SOLAR FARMS OR SOLAR ENERGY FACILITY (COMMERCIAL USE)**
To facilitate the construction, installation, and operation of Solar Energy Facilities (a.k.a. Solar Farms) in Columbia Township in a manner that minimizes the adverse impacts to forestry, agricultural, commercial and residential lands, this Section’s purpose is to protect and enhance the economic viability and financial interests of residents, farms and business owners of Columbia Township. This ordinance is not intended to abridge safety, health or environmental requirements contained in applicable codes, standards or ordinance and shall comply with all state and federal laws.
1. Solar Farms/Solar Energy Facilities (for commercial) shall comply with the following conditions:
 - a. Shall only be located on parcels of at least 10 contiguous acres having a minimum lot width of 330 feet.
 - b. The application shall provide verification that adequate infrastructure exists to transport the electricity generated into the larger grid system from the electric utility.
 - c. The application shall provide verification that there exists an adequate water supply for the site.
 - d. The installation of the panels and associated structures shall not disturb the existing topography and soil.
 - e. The mounting height of the panels as well as the total height of the panels (in an elevated or tilted position) shall be provided. The Planning Commission may regulate the overall height of the panels based on surrounding land uses.
 - f. The plans submitted shall include a site restoration plan showing the use of the site should the panels be removed, as well as described method and mechanisms to implement the site restoration plan. To this end an abandonment or decommissioning plan shall be filed with the Township and a security bond or other funding acceptable to the Township Board after review by the Township attorney, shall be reviewed and renewed annually with the Township Board, two months prior to the renewal date. The security shall cover 125% of the estimated cost of deconstruction, removal, and hazardous materials disposal of the solar array. Failure to renew the security deposit shall constitute intent to abandon.

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2. Requirements for All Panels
 - a. The applicant shall supply a complete site plan for any solar energy systems to the Fire Department.
 - b. The solar energy system shall be fitted with a warning notice at the meter and an automatic shut off or breaker switch as required by the State Fire Code.
 - c. The applicant shall provide the Fire Department with all pertinent information relative to the type of solar energy system that the solar panel array is a part of, either photovoltaic or thermal.
 - d. All panels shall have tempered, non-reflective surfaces.
 - e. It shall be shown that all panels are adequately secured to the surface upon which they are mounted and that the mounting structure has the capability of supporting the panels.
 - f. The installation of the panels shall not require or be reliant on the clear cutting of trees or other vegetation.
 - g. The installation of any solar panel (private or commercial) shall not negatively impact adjacent properties with additional or excessive storm water runoff and/or drainage.
3. Site Plan Requirements
 - a. A six (6) foot high perimeter fence shall be designed to restrict access to the solar energy facility. If a wire fence is used, vegetation shall be planted along the sides adjoining any public road.
 - b. All improved areas shall be at least 60 feet from any public road right-of-way and 60 feet from an exterior lot line.
 - c. All solar energy facility structures shall be at least 100 feet from any building on an adjacent property measured from the building wall to the nearest portion of any solar energy structure.
 - d. Any structure associated with the solar energy facility shall be located at least 50 feet from the property line of any residence or residential zoning district.
 - e. All solar energy facilities located adjacent to a residential zoning district or residential parcel of less than 10 acres shall have a minimum landscape buffer of 25 feet in width. The buffer shall consist of evergreen trees or bushes planted no more than 8 feet apart and at least 4 feet tall at the time of planting. The planted buffer may be waived if a solid opaque fence or wall is substituted.
4. Abandonment Plan and Security Deposit

A Solar Energy Facility (SEF) that ceases to produce energy on a continuous basis for 24 months will be considered abandoned unless the current responsible party (or parties) with ownership interest in the SEF presents evidence to the Planning Commission of the intent to maintain or reinstate operations of the facility.

 - a. Upon a determination of abandonment by the Planning Commission the Zoning Administrator shall notify the responsible party(ies) that the SEF must be removed and the site restored to its

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- condition prior to the development of the SEF within 90 days of the date of the Planning Commission decision.
- b. If the responsible party(ies) fail(s) to comply, the Township may initiate legal proceedings against the responsible party(ies) to recover the costs required for removal of the SEF and restore the site.
 - c. The Township Planning Commission may require a security deposit from the property owner and/or the operator of the SEF sufficient to cover 125% of the estimated cost of removal prior to construction of the SEF.

SECTION 3.04 A – Agricultural District

- A. Parcels over 10 acres ...
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 - 5. Uses Permitted by Special Use Permit
 - ...
 - q. Solar Farms or Solar Energy Facilities

- B. Parcels under 10 acres....
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 - 5. Uses Permitted by Special Use Permit
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 - n. Solar Farms or Solar Energy Facilities