

Commission may suggest that the proposal, or certain aspects thereof, be referred to other municipal, State, or Federal agencies for review and comment, or Federal agencies for review and comment or may suggest that additional information is or will be required.

M. Accessory Uses

The following uses may be permitted as accessory to the age-restricted housing development at the discretion of the Commission.

- i. Clubhouse, including health and fitness facility, athletic facilities, swimming pool, and meeting rooms.
- ii. Tennis courts, bocce courts, and other recreational facilities.

7.18 Solar Energy Systems (Effective 08-11-2015)

A. Purpose: The purpose of this subsection is to provide for the regulation of the construction and operation of Solar Energy Facilities in the Town of Stafford subject to reasonable conditions that will protect the environment, public health, safety, and welfare.

B. Definitions:

- 1. **Solar Energy System, Large:** A solar energy collection system that can be used to serve all or part of the electric load at one or more properties and consumers.
- 2. **Solar Energy System, Roof-Mounted:** A solar collection system, that is installed upon or is part of the roof of a building or structure located on the subject property. Systems integrated as awnings or attached to the roofs of porches, sheds, carports, and covered parking structures also fall under this distinction.
- 3. **Solar Energy System, Small:** An accessory solar energy collection system or photovoltaic system.

C. Small-Scale Solar Energy Systems

Small solar energy systems shall be a permitted as an accessory use by right in all zoning districts subject to the requirements set forth in this section: Solar energy systems include ground, pole, and roof-mounted systems.

- 1. The construction of the small solar energy system shall be in accordance with an approved zoning permit and building permit application.
- 2. Setback:
 - a. In residential districts ground- or pole-mounted small-scale solar energy systems shall be placed so that no individual component is closer than the height of the array from the rear lot line or side lot lines. Ground or pole-mounted solar energy system shall only be allowed in the rear or the side yard behind the front building line.

- b. In zones LB and CB ground- or pole-mounted small-scale solar energy systems shall be placed so that no individual component of the solar system may extend into the front, side, or rear setback for the district. Ground mounted small-scale solar systems shall be screened from adjoining residential districts by arborvitae or similar evergreen hedge planted six feet on center. The Commission may allow additional or alternative screening methods such as berms and opaque fencing when it is determined that such alternatives are more appropriate for that site.
- c. In zones HB, HI and HB, ground- or pole-mounted small-scale solar energy systems shall be placed so that the minimum distance to the side or rear setback is equal to or greater than the height of any individual component of the solar system, including any mounts. Ground mounted small-scale solar systems shall be screened from adjoining residential districts by arborvitae or similar evergreen hedge planted six feet on center. The Commission may allow additional or alternative screening methods such as berms and opaque fencing when it is determined that such alternatives are more appropriate for that site.

D. Ground-Mounted Small Solar Energy Systems:

- 1. The total height of the solar energy system including any mounts shall not exceed the maximum height of accessory structures permitted in that district.
- 2. The system shall meet all applicable current building codes.

E. Roof-Mounted Small Solar Energy Systems:

Roof-mounted small solar energy systems shall include integrated solar shingles tiles or panels as the surface layer of the roof structure with no additional apparent change in relief or projection (the preferred installation) or separate flush or rack-mounted solar panels mechanically fastened to and/or secured with ballast on the roof surface in conformance with applicable current building codes.

- 1. Separate flush or rack-mounted small solar energy systems installed on the roof of a building or structure shall not project vertically more than eight (8) feet above a flat roof installation.
- 2. It shall be demonstrated that the placement of the system shall not adversely affect safe access to the roof, pathways to specific areas of the roof, and safe egress from the roof.

F. Appearance:

- 1. Appearance, color, and finish. The small solar energy system shall remain painted or finished the color or finish that was originally applied by the manufacturer.
- 2. All signs, other than the manufacturer's or installer's identification, appropriate warning signs, or owner identification on a small solar energy system shall be prohibited. Installer and/or developer are limited to one (1) sign indicating their role in the system installation.

3. The maximum area of signage is one (1) square foot.
4. No signage shall pertain to advertising.

G. Code Compliance:

A small solar energy system shall comply with all applicable current Building codes.

H. Removal:

All obsolete or unused systems shall be removed within twelve (12) months of cessation of operations without cost to the Town.

I. Violation:

Subsequent to the effective date of this ordinance, it is unlawful for any person to construct, install, or operate a small solar energy system that is not in compliance with this chapter or with any condition contained in a building permit issued pursuant to this chapter.

J. Large Scale Energy Systems

Any system greater than 100 kW AC shall require a special use permit.

1. Compliance with Laws, Ordinances and Regulations

The construction and operation of all large scale Solar Energy System shall be consistent with all applicable current local, state, and federal requirements, including but not limited to all applicable safety, construction, electrical, and communications requirements.

2. Building Permit and Building Inspection

No large scale Solar Energy System shall be constructed installed or modified as provided in this section without first obtaining a zoning permit and building permit.

3. Site Plan Review

Ground-mounted large scale Solar Energy System with 100 kW AC or larger of rated nameplate capacity are allowed in Business and Industrial Districts and on lots 20 (twenty) acres or more in size in residential districts subject to a Special Use Permit by the Stafford Planning and Zoning Commission prior to construction, installation, or modification as provided in this section

a. General

All plans and maps shall be prepared, stamped, and signed by a Professional Engineer licensed to practice in Connecticut.

b. Required Documents

Pursuant to the site plan review process, the project proponent shall provide the following documents in addition to the Site Plan submission requirements of Section 8.3:

- i. Blueprints or drawings of the Solar Energy System signed by a Professional Engineer licensed to practice in Connecticut showing the

proposed layout of the system and any potential shading from nearby structures.

- ii. Manufacturer’s data sheets or similar documentation of the major system components to be used, including the PV panels, mounting system, and inverter.
- iii. Full contact information, including name, address, phone number, and e-mail address for proposed system installer.
- iv. Name, address, phone number, and signature of the project proponent, as well as all co-proponents or property owners, if any.
- v. The name, contact information, and signature of any agents representing the project proponent; and
- vi. Documentation of actual or prospective access and control of the project site.
- vii. An operation and maintenance plan.
- viii. Zoning district designation for the parcel(s) of land comprising the project site.
- ix. Proof of liability insurance.

The Stafford Planning and Zoning Commission may waive documentary requirements that it finds are unnecessary to determine compliance with these regulations, as it deems appropriate.

4. **Site Control:** The project proponent shall submit documentation of actual or prospective access and control of the project site sufficient to allow for construction and operation of the proposed Solar Energy System.
5. **Operation and Maintenance Plan:** The project proponent shall submit a plan for the operation and maintenance of the large-scale, ground-mounted Solar Energy System, which shall include measures for maintaining safe access to the installation, storm water controls, as well as general procedures for operational maintenance of the installation.

6. **Dimension and Density Requirements**

a. **Setbacks**

For large - scale ground-mounted Solar Energy System, front, side and rear setbacks shall be as follows:

- i. **Front yard:** The front yard depth shall be at least 10 feet; provided, however, where the lot is across from a Residential district, the front yard shall not be less than 50 feet.
- ii. **Side yard.** Each side yard shall have a depth at least 25 feet; provided, however, where the lot abuts a Residential district, the side yard shall not be less than 50 feet.

- iii. Rear yard. The rear yard depth shall be at least 20 feet; provided, however, where the lot abuts a Residential district, the rear yard shall not be less than 50 feet
- 7. **Accessory Structures:** All accessory structures to large-scale ground-mounted Solar Energy System shall be subject to the underlying zoning requirements concerning the bulk and height of structures, lot area, setbacks, open space, parking and building coverage requirements. All such accessory structures including, but not limited to, equipment shelters, storage facilities, transformers, and substations shall be architecturally compatible with each other. Whenever reasonable, structures should be shaded from view by vegetation and/or joined or clustered to avoid adverse visual impacts as determined by the Commission.
- 8. **Design Standards**
 - a. **Lighting**

Lighting of large-scale Solar Energy System shall be consistent with local, state, and federal law. Lighting of other parts of the installation, such as accessory structures, shall be limited to that required for safety and operational purposes, and shall be reasonably shielded from abutting properties. Lighting of the Solar Energy System shall be directed downward and shall incorporate full cut-off fixtures to reduce light pollution.
 - b. **Signage**

Signs on large-scale ground-mounted Solar Energy System shall comply with the Sign regulations. A sign consistent with the regulations shall be required to identify the owner and provide a 24-hour emergency contact phone number.
 - c. **Utility Connections**

Reasonable efforts, as determined by the Stafford Planning and Zoning Commission, shall be made to place all wiring from the Solar Energy System underground, depending on appropriate soil conditions, shape, and topography of the site and any requirements of the utility provider. Electrical transformers, inverters, and switchgears for utility interconnections may be above ground.
 - d. **Screening**

A ground mounted large solar energy system shall be screened from adjoining residential districts by arborvitae or similar evergreen hedge planted six feet on center. The Commission may allow additional or alternative screening methods including existing vegetation when it is determined that such alternatives are more appropriate for the particular site. The Commission may also allow fencing greater than six (6) feet in height where deemed appropriate.
- 9. **Safety and Environmental Standards**
 - a. **Emergency Services**

The large scale Solar Energy System owner or operator shall provide a copy of the project summary, electrical schematic, and site plan to the local fire marshal. Upon request, the owner or operator shall cooperate with local emergency services in developing an emergency response plan. All means of shutting down the Solar Energy System shall be clearly marked. The owner or operator shall identify a responsible person for public inquiries throughout the life of the installation.

b. Land Clearing and Soil Erosion Impacts

Clearing of natural vegetation shall be limited to what is necessary for the construction, operation, and maintenance of the large-scale ground-mounted Solar Energy System or otherwise prescribed by applicable laws, regulations, and bylaws

10. Monitoring and Maintenance

a. Solar Energy System Conditions

The large-scale ground-mounted Solar Energy System owner or operator shall maintain the facility in good condition. Maintenance shall include, but not be limited to, painting, structural repairs, and integrity of security measures. Site access shall be maintained to a level acceptable to the local Fire Marshal and Emergency Medical Services. The owner or operator shall be responsible for the cost of maintaining the Solar Energy System and any access road(s), unless accepted as a public way.

11. Abandonment or Decommissioning

a. Removal Requirements

Any large- scale ground-mounted Solar Energy System that has reached the end of its useful life or has been abandoned consistent with section 5.60.2.12 b of this regulation shall be removed. The owner or operator shall physically remove the installation no more than 150 days after the date of discontinued operations. The owner or operator shall notify the Stafford Planning and Zoning Commission by certified mail of the proposed date of discontinued operations and plans for removal. Decommissioning shall consist of:

- i. Physical removal of all large- scale ground-mounted Solar Energy System, structures, equipment, security barriers, and transmission lines from the site.
- ii. Disposal of all solid and hazardous waste in accordance with local, state, and federal waste disposal regulations.
- iii. Stabilization or re-vegetation of the site as necessary to minimize erosion. The Stafford Planning and Zoning Commission may allow the owner or operator to leave landscaping or designated below-grade foundations in order to minimize erosion and disruption to vegetation.

- iv. A stabilization/re-vegetation plan shall be submitted along with the Site Plan application.

b. Abandonment

Absent notice of a proposed date of decommissioning or written notice of extenuating circumstances, the Solar Energy System shall be considered abandoned when it fails to operate for more than one year without the written consent of the Stafford Planning and Zoning Commission. If the owner or operator of the large-scale ground-mounted Solar Energy System fails to remove the installation in accordance with the requirements of this section within 150 days of abandonment or the proposed date of decommissioning, the town may enter the property and physically remove the installation.

7.19 Accessory Agricultural Activities

A. Accessory Agricultural Activities (Ag-tivities) - The following fee-based activities are considered to be accessory to an established agricultural operation. A Site Plan Review shall be required when the following uses may reasonably be expected to require parking for twenty (20) or more motor vehicles, used by visitors to the farm, at any given time. Otherwise, such uses require only an Agricultural Activity “Ag-tivity” Permit.

1. **Agricultural Engagement-** The opening to the public of a working farm or any agricultural, horticultural, or agribusiness operation for the purpose of enjoyment, education, or active involvement in the activities of the farm or operation, including (but not limited to) “U-Pick”, Community Supported Agriculture (CSA), Wine tours & associated tastings, agricultural workshops, classes, and demonstrations.
2. **Agricultural Events-** Events of limited duration on a farm that are incidental to agricultural uses, including (but not limited to) hayrides, corn mazes, festivals, petting zoos, and other similar activities.

B. Non-agriculturally Related Uses- Fee-based activities that are part of an agricultural operation’s overall offering, but are not incidental to agriculture, are allowed by permit. Such uses may include (but not limited to) outdoor recreation such as bird watching, snow-shoeing, cross country skiing, mountain biking, and other passive recreational activities, as well as rental of farm property for small and large-scale events, such as parties, weddings, and other non-agricultural events.

1. **“Small-scale Farm Events”** are allowed with an Agricultural Activity “Ag-tivity” Permit. Only low-volume amplified sound or music (as determined by the ZEO) will be allowed during these events. A Site Plan Review will only be required if these events happen more than ten (10) times per year, or they require parking for more than twenty (20) vehicles, at any given time.