

FAQ
TOWN OF POMPEY PROPOSED SOLAR FARM OVERLAY DISTRICT LOCAL LAW
Jan. 2021

1) QUESTION: Why did the Town decide to revise the existing zoning code in regards to solar energy?

ANSWER: The Town passed a Local Law in 2015 (L.L. No. 1-2015) regulating roof mounted and ground-mounted solar energy conversion systems. That regulation allowed solar collection systems(SCS) only for purposes of supplying electrical power or heat for onsite use. It allowed net metering if the parcel on which the SCS was installed received electrical power supplied by a utility company such as National Grid. It did not, however, allow installation of SCS primarily for off-site sale of the energy generated such as would be the case with a “solar farm”.

The purpose of the current regulation is to revise the requirements for roof-mounted and ground-mounted SCS. It also allows and regulates “solar farms”.

2) QUESTION: How large would solar farms in the Town of Pompey be and how much land would they require?

ANSWER: In New York State, there are two general categories of solar energy projects: large-scale or “utility-scale solar” which are typically larger than 5 megawatts(MW) and are built with the primary purpose of supplying wholesale electricity to the grid and “Distributed Energy Resource”(DER) projects which are typically 5 MW or less and require a “customer” to purchase the electricity. DER projects(ie less than 5MW) are the types of projects we would expect to see in the Town of Pompey. They would include community solar projects(solar farms), residential/commercial rooftop solar projects, or small ground mounted solar projects.

Solar farms typically require approximately 5-6 acres per MW. Based on a 5MW solar farm, the expected parcel of land required would be 25-30 acres.

3) QUESTION: Where would solar farms potentially be located in the Town of Pompey?

ANSWER: Solar farms require access to 3 phase infrastructure. They also require hosting capacity on National Grid's 3 phase infrastructure. The following map was taken from National Grid's hosting website in December 2020. The heavy, multi-colored lines indicate where in the Town, 3-phase infrastructure is currently located. The color of the lines indicate how much hosting capacity is available from the 4 substations from which the Town derives its power. Dark red and red indicate limited hosting capacity. Blue, green and yellow indicate a greater amount of hosting capacity and therefore, a greater ability to support a solar farm.



4) QUESTION: How will the proposed local law protect viewsheds?

ANSWER: For Tier 2 systems(small ground mounted systems):

- Installed in side(unless side yard abuts highway) and rear yards only
- Setbacks are double the required setback in the given zoning district
- Height limitations same as those for accessory structures
- Minimize view from adjacent properties and roadway
- Adequate screening using architectural features,earthen berms or landscaping(continuous hedge at least 25% higher than solar array within 2 years of planting). Screening shall harmonize with surrounding area.
- Max landscape coverage-50% for all buildings & structures including Tier 2 solar array.
- Tier 2 systems are not allowed in R, R-40, HC and HR zoning districts

For Tier 3 systems(solar farms):

- Requires approval of Solar Energy System Overlay District by Town Board including a Public Hearing
- Requires Planning Board site plan review(including Public Hearing) and recommendation to Town Board for overlay zoning approval
- Lot must be at least 10 acres in size
- Minimum Setbacks: 100 feet front setback, 100 feet from an abutting lot
- Maximum height no greater than 20 feet at maximum tilt angle
- Max landscape coverage-50% for all buildings & structures including Tier 3 solar array
- Visual assessment required of visual impact on public highways and adjacent properties
- Applicant must submit a screening and landscape plan to screen and/or mitigate adverse aesthetic impacts on public roads and adjacent properties to the extent feasible
- For projects located on lands zoned Farm, Tier 3 system shall not exceed 50% of area of Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland or Farmland of Statewide Importance as defined in the applicable laws/regulations
- Tier 3 systems are not allowed in R, R-40, HC and HR zoning districts