## PO BOX 66 UTICA, PA 16362

## **SOLAR ORDINANCE**

#### ORDINANCE No. 01-24

# AN ORDINANCE OF THE BOROUGH OF UTICA, COUNTY OF VENANGO, COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA, TO SET FORTH REQUIREMENTS FOR SOLAR ENERGY SYSTEMS

**WHEREAS**, the Borough of Utica, County of Venango, Commonwealth of Pennsylvania (hereinafter the "Borough") seeks to promote the general health, safety, and welfare of the community by adopting and providing access to and use of solar energy systems; and

**WHEREAS**, the purpose of the Ordinance is to set forth requirements for solar energy systems and Conditional Use requirements:

**NOW THEREFORE, IT IS HERBY ENACTED AND ORDAINED**, by the Borough Council of Utica Borough, Venango County, Pennsylvania, and it is enacted and ordained as follows:

**SECTION 1:** Definitions

ACCESSORY SOLAR ENERGY SYSTEM (ASES): An area of land or other area used for a solar energy system used to capture solar energy, convert it to electrical energy or thermal power and supply electrical or thermal power primarily for on-site use, clearly incidental and subordinate to an approved existing principal use or a principal use to be established in conjunction with the Accessory Solar Energy System. Ground mounted or freestanding Solar Energy Systems with an output size of not greater than 10kw shall be considered Accessory Solar Energy Systems. Roof Mounted Solar Energy Systems on the roof of buildings on-site used primarily for on-site use shall have no limit as to power output. An accessory solar energy system consists of one (1) or more free-standing ground, or roof mounted solar arrays or modules, or solar related equipment and is intended to primarily reduce on-site consumption of utility power or fuels for use on-site by the generator. All components of an ASES shall be located on the same parcel as the principal use it serves.

**AGRIVOLTAICS:** the co-development of the same area of land for both solar photovoltaic power and "Normal Farming Operations" as defined by P.L. 454, No. 133 (1982) the Protection of Agricultural Operations from Nuisance Suits and Ordinances Act, or any successor laws.

UTICA BOROUGH COUNCIL: The Elected Council of Utica Borough, Venango County.

**CONDITIONAL USE:** A use permitted in the Borough, which may only be authorized by Utica Borough Council, as set forth in Section 906 of this Ordinance.

**FINANCIAL SECURITY:** A form of security including a cash deposit, surety bond, irrevocable letter of credit, cashier's check, escrow account from a federal or Commonwealth chartered

lending institution or other surety acceptable to the Borough Solicitor in the amount of 110% of the total proposed decommissioning costs and in a form satisfactory to Utica Borough Council and the Borough Solicitor.

**SOLAR ARRAY:** A system of group of solar panels connected together.

**SOLAR EASEMENT:** A solar easement means a right, expressed as an easement, restriction, covenant, or condition contained in any deed, contract, or other written instrument executed by or on behalf of any landowner for the purpose of assuring adequate access to direct sunlight for solar energy systems.

**SOLAR ENERGY:** Radiant energy (direct, diffuse and/or reflective) received from the sun.

**SOLAR ENERGY FACILITY:** An area of land used for a solar collections system principally to capture solar energy, convert it to electrical energy or thermal power and supply electrical or thermal power primarily for off-site use. Principal solar energy systems consist of one (1) or more free-standing ground, or roof mounted solar collector devices, solar related equipment and other accessory structures and buildings including light reflectors, concentrators, and heat exchangers, substations, electrical infrastructure, transmission lines and other appurtenant structures.

**SOLAR ENERGY PROJECT:** A group of two or more Solar Energy Facilities which are held by owner or leased to a common lessor and which are part of a single solar energy production development project.

**SOLAR ENERGY PROJECT OWNER:** The individual, group, or entity responsible for the permitting, construction and operation of a Solar Energy Facility or Solar Energy Project (SEF Developer).

**SOLAR FACILITY CONNECTION:** The high-voltage electric conveyance lines which connect a Solar Energy Facility to the Solar Project Connection.

**SOLAR PROJECT CONNECTION:** The electric conveyance lines which connect a Solar Energy Facility to the high-voltage electric interconnection grid.

**SOLAR PANEL:** That part or portion of a solar energy system containing one or more receptive cells or modules, the purpose of which is to convert solar energy for use in space heating or cooling, for water heating and/or for electricity.

**SOLAR RELATED EQUIPMENT:** Items including a solar photovoltaic cell, module, panel, or array, or solar hot air or water collector device panels, lines, pumps, batteries, mounting brackets, framing and foundations or other structures used for or intended to be used for collection of solar energy.

SECTION 2: "Solar Energy Facilities" as a Conditional Use.

### 1. ACCESSORY SOLAR ENERGY SYSTEMS (ASES)

- A. Criteria Applicable to all Accessory Solar Energy Systems:
  - (1) ASES shall be permitted as a use by right in the Borough, provided that an appropriate building permit is obtained.
  - (2) The ASES layout, design, installation, and ongoing maintenance shall conform to applicable industry standards, such as those of the American National Standards Institute (ANSI), Underwriters Laboratories (UL), the American Society for Testing Materials (ASTM), Institute of Electrical Engineers (IEEE), Solar Rating and Certification Corporation (SRCC), Electrical Testing Laboratory (ETL), or other similar certifying organizations, and shall comply with the PA Uniform Construction Code, and with all other applicable fire and life safety requirements.

Upon completion of installation, the ASES shall be maintained in good working order in accordance with standards of the codes under which the ASES was constructed. Failure of the property owner to maintain the ASES in good working order is grounds for appropriate enforcement actions by the Utica Borough Council in accordance with applicable ordinances.

(3) All on-site utility, connection lines, and plumbing shall be placed underground to the greatest extent possible as determined by the Borough Engineer.

#### (4) Glare

- a. All ASES shall be placed such that concentrated solar radiation or glare does not project onto nearby structures or roadways. Exterior surfaces shall have a nonreflective finish.
- b. The Applicant has the burden of proving that any glare produced does not have significant adverse impact on neighboring or adjacent uses either through siting or mitigation.

## (5) Decommissioning

- a. Each ASES and all solar related equipment shall be removed withing six (6) months of the date when the use has been discontinued or abandoned by system owner and/or operator, or upon termination of the useful life of same.
- b. The ASES shall be presumed to be discontinued or abandoned if no electricity is generated by such solar collector for a period of six (6) continuous months.
- c. The ASES owner shall, at the request of the Utica Borough Council provide information concerning the amount of energy generated by the ASEs in the last 6 months.

- (6) Building permit applications shall document compliance with this Section and other applicable sections of this Ordinance and shall be in accordance with Article 803 of this Ordinance.
- B. Roof Mounted and Wall Mounted Accessory Solar Energy Systems:
  - (1) A roof mounted or wall mounted ASES may be located on a principal or accessory building.
  - (2) The total height of a building with an ASES shall not exceed three (3) feet above the maximum height of such building.
  - (3) Solar panels shall not extend beyond any portion of the roof edge.
  - (4) For roof and wall mounted systems, the Applicant shall provide evidence that the plans comply with the Uniform Construction Code, including that the roof or wall is capable of holding the load imposed on the structure.
- C. Ground Mounted Accessory Solar Energy Systems:
  - (1) Setbacks
    - The minimum yard setbacks from side and rear property lines shall be fifty (50) feet
    - A ground mounted ASES shall not be located in the required front yard, unless the principal structure is set back more than 240 ft. from the Front Lot Line, in which case, the ASES shall be set back not less than 200 ft. from the Front Lot Line.
  - (2) Height. Ground mounted ASES shall not exceed 15 feet in height above the ground elevation surrounding the systems.
  - (3) Buffering
    - Ground mounted ASES shall be buffered from any adjacent residential uses by a buffer yard of at least 30 feet. Such buffer yard shall be part of the commercial installation and shall be parallel and adjacent to the boundary.
    - Ground mounted ASES shall be buffered from any adjacent agricultural uses by a buffer yard of at least 15 feet. Such buffer yard shall be part of the commercial installation and shall be parallel and adjacent to the boundary.
    - Ground mounted ASES shall be buffered from any other uses by a buffer yard of at least 20 feet. Such buffer yard shall be part of the commercial installation and shall be parallel and adjacent to the boundary.

- (4) Appropriate safety/warning signage concerning voltage shall be placed at ground mounted electrical devices, equipment, and structures. All electrical control devices associated with the ASES shall be locked to prevent unauthorized access or entry.
- (5) Ground-mounted ASES shall not be placed within any legal easement or right-of-way location or be placed within any storm water conveyance system, unless the Applicant can demonstrate, to the satisfaction of the Utica Borough Council, that the ASES will not impede stormwater management, or in any other manner alter or impede storm water runoff from collecting in a constructed storm water conveyance system.

## 2. SOLAR ENERGY FACILITY (SEF)

#### A. Criteria Applicable to All SEFs:

- (1) The SEF layout, design, and installation shall conform to good industry practice, "Good industry practice" shall mean the practices, methods, standards, and acts (engaged in or approved by a significant portion of the solar power industry for similar facilities in the similar geographic areas that are similar in size and complexity) as the same may change from time to time, that, at a particular time, in the exercise of reasonable professional judgment in light of the facts known at the time a decision was made, would have been expected to accomplish the desired result in a manner consistent with applicable law, regulation, codes, good business practices, reliability, safety, environmental protection, economy, expedition, and shall comply with the PA Uniform Construction Code and with all other applicable fire and life safety requirements.
- (2) The application shall include a construction transportation plan that shows all roadways that will be utilized to access the site, which shall be forwarded to the Borough for review for the purposes of determining any bonding requirements per the Borough's prevailing road bonding policy.
- (3) DC voltage Solar Array Connections may be located above ground.
- (4) AC Solar Facility Connections should be located underground where feasible. If not, the ACC Solar Facility Connections may be located above ground where the Applicant must demonstrate to the satisfaction of the Borough that the overall environmental impacts would support above ground locations.
- (5) Solar Project Connections may be located above ground.
- (6) No portion of the SEF shall contain or be used to display advertising. The manufacturer's name and equipment information or indication of ownership shall be allowed on any equipment of the SEF provided they comply with any prevailing sign regulations.

### (7) Noise management

- a. A Noise Management Plan that addresses noise produced during construction (limited to the hours of 7 am - 7 pm for construction) and during the facilities operation to be approved by the Borough Council shall be included with the Venango County Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance application.
- b. The Plan at a minimum shall separately address noise during construction and facility operations and include, mitigation, and an assessment of the noise that will emanate at the perimeter fence and the contact information for the individual who is responsible for implementation and compliance both during construction and operations.
- c. The volume of sound inherently and recurrently generated shall be controlled so as not to cause a nuisance to adjacent uses.
- d. During operation of the SEF, audible sound shall not exceed a maximum of 60 dBA during daytime hours and 55 dBA during nighttime hours as measured at the exterior of any occupied building on a non-participating landowner's property.

#### (8) Glare

- a. All SEF shall be placed such that concentrated solar radiation or glare does not project onto nearby structures or roadways. Exterior surfaces shall have a nonreflective finish.
- The Applicant has the burden of proving that any glare produced does not have significant adverse impact on neighboring or adjacent uses either through siting or mitigation.
- (9) The SEF owner and/or operator shall maintain a phone number and identify a person responsible for the public to contact with inquiries and complaints through the life of the project and provide this number and name to Utica Borough Council. The SEF owner and/or operator shall make reasonable efforts to respond to the public's inquiries and complaints. In addition, the phone number, QR code or website address that contains said contact information must be posted at the place of access at all times.

#### (10) Decommissioning

a. The SEF owner is required to notify Utica Borough Council immediately upon cessation or abandonment of the operation. The SEF shall be presumed to be discontinued or abandoned if no electricity is generated by such system for a period of six (6) continuous months.

- b. The SEF owner shall then have six (6) months in which to dismantle and remove the SEF including all solar related equipment or appurtenances related thereto, including but not limited to buildings, cabling, electrical components, roads, foundations, solar facility connections and other associated facilities in accordance with agreements with landowners and good industry practice.
- c. Materials which cannot be re-sold or salvaged shall be disposed of at facility authorized to dispose of such materials by federal or state law.
- d. Any soil exposed during the removal shall be stabilized in accordance with applicable erosion and sediment control standards.
- e. Any access drive paved aprons from public roads shall remain for future use unless directed otherwise by the landowner.
- f. The SEF site area shall be restored to its pre-existing condition, suitable for its prior use, except the landowner may authorize, in writing, any buffer landscaping or access roads installed to accommodate the SEF to remain.
- g. Any necessary permits, such as Erosion and Sedimentation and NPDES permits, shall be obtained prior to decommissioning activities.
- h. Prior to issuance of approval for the construction of the SEF, the owner shall provide financial security in the form and amount acceptable to the Borough and in favor of the Borough, to secure its obligations under this Section.
  - i. The SEF Developer shall, at the time of the application, provide the Borough with an estimate of the cost of performing the decommissioning activities required herein. The Solar Project Owner shall provide financial security of 110% of the estimated cost of decommissioning. The estimate may include an estimated salvage and resale value, discounted by a factor of 10%. The decommissioning cost minus 90% credit of salvage and resale value equals the decommissioning cost estimate.
  - ii. On every fifth anniversary of the date of providing the decommissioning financial security the SEF Owner shall provide an updated decommission cost estimate, utilizing the formula set forth above with adjustments for inflation and cost and value changes. The SEF Owner shall remit the increased financial security to the Borough within 30 days of the approval of the updated decommissioning security estimate by the Borough. If the decommissioning security amount decreases by greater than 10%, the Borough shall release from security any amounts held in excess of 110% of the updated decommission cost estimate.
  - iii. Decommissioning security estimates shall be subject to review and approval by the Utica Borough Council, and the SEF Developer/Owner shall be responsible for administrative, legal, and engineering costs incurred by Utica Borough Council for such review.

- iv. The decommissioning security may be in the form of cash deposit, surety bond, irrevocable letter of credit, cashier's check, escrow account from a federal or Commonwealth chartered lending institution or another surety acceptable to the Borough Solicitor in the amount of 110% of the total proposed decommission cost estimate and in a form that is satisfactory to the Borough and the Borough Solicitor.
- v. Prior to the final approval of any SALDO plans for a SEF, the SEF Developer shall enter into a Decommissioning Agreement with the Borough outlining the responsibility of the parties under the Agreement as to the Decommissioning of the SEF.
- (11) An Emergency Response Plan shall be included with the application, which shall be reviewed and approved by the Borough.

## (12) Permit Requirements

- a. SEF shall comply with the Venango County subdivision and land development requirement(s) through submission of a land development plan.
- b. The installation of the SEF shall be in compliance with all applicable permit requirements, codes and regulations, including highway occupancy, driveway and road bonding requirements.
- c. The SEF owner and/or operator shall repair, maintain, and replace SEF and related solar equipment during the term of the permit in a manner consistent with industry standards as needed to keep the SEF in good repair and operating condition.

## B. Ground Mounted Principal Solar Energy Systems

(1) SEF Development Area is equal to the total acres of land subject to lease by the SEF Developer. Where the area of land subject to the lease is greater than 75% of the parcel, the entire parcel will be considered to be a SEF Development Area.

#### (2) Solar Array Locations:

- a. Solar Arrays may be located only on 75% of the total Class I and II agricultural soils within the SEF Development Area, unless the area will be devoted to Agrivoltaic activities, in which case 100% of the Class I and II soils may be included in the SEF Development Area.
- b. For each parcel on which a SEF, or a component of a SEF, is proposed, a map shall be provided by the Applicant detailing the SEF Development Area, the Constrained Area, the Class I and II agricultural soils, and the Portion of the SEF Development that may be devoted to Solar Arrays.

- c. Solar Arrays shall only be placed within that portion of any lot that lies within the Portion of the SEF Development that may be devoted to Solar Arrays.
- d. Solar Arrays shall not be located in:
  - i. Floodways, as identified in the FEMA FIRM mapping.
  - ii. Regulated natural and man-made drainage corridors, extending twenty-five (25) feet from the centerline of any such drainage feature unless the Borough determines a lesser setback would create less impacts to the overall project.
  - iii. Wetlands: Development may occur on any wetland area of less than one (1) acre if the Borough determines the development of that area would create less impacts to the overall project. Any such development in a wetland must receive the required approval of the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection and/or the United States Army Corps of Engineers.
  - iv. Wetlands buffer areas extending twenty-five (25) feet from any wetland unless the Borough determines a lesser setback would create less impact to the overall project.
  - v. Slopes in excess of fifteen percent (15%), unless the Borough determines locations in an area in excess of 15% would create less impacts to the overall project.
  - vi. Wooded areas primarily devoted to mature trees in excess of 2 acres that would require removal of greater than 20% of mature trees, unless the Borough determines that greater tree removal would create less impacts to the overall project. For the purpose of this clause, brushes and shrubs are not considered trees.
  - vii. Road Rights-of-Way.
  - viii. Setback Areas.

## (3) Setbacks

- a. Fencing required by this Ordinance shall be considered a principal structure for purposes of setbacks. Minimum setbacks shall be twenty (20) feet. A SEF must maintain a minimum setback of fifty (50) feet from any residential building.
- b. No lot line setback will be required between parcels where there is a grouping of two or more SEF's which are held by a common owner or leased to a common lessor and which are part of a single solar energy production development project, where each landowner has provided a written and notarized waiver of the lot line setback.

- c. The application shall include with the project submission details of mitigation measure to be implemented to preserve wildlife corridors including between SEF's of a Solar Energy Project.
- d. A minimum twenty-five (25) foot buffer shall be maintained along either side of any regulated stream or wetland.

## (4) Height

- a. All ground mounted solar panels shall be a maximum of fifteen (15) feet in height.
- b. All other SEF components and structures shall be a maximum of twenty (20) feet in height.
- c. SEF components may be in excess of the maximum height requirement where the Applicant can demonstrate to the satisfaction of the Borough the necessity and benefit.
- d. There are no maximum height restrictions for structures that support Solar Facility Connections and Solar Project Connections.
- (5) Ground mounted SEF shall be screened in accordance with the following standards.
  - a. Vegetative buffering, to the extent practical, shall be installed around the entire perimeter of the SEF installation, except where the Borough determines that the retention of existing trees within the vegetative buffering area may constitute the required vegetative buffer or where the Borough determines that the solar panels cannot be viewed from a public roadway or residential use.
  - b. The vegetative buffering shall be installed along the exterior side of the fencing. All required vegetative buffering shall be located within fifty (50) feet of the required fencing.
  - c. Vegetative buffering should be designed to emulate the mix of native species and appearance of existing tree lines, hedge rows, and wooded areas already in existence within the landscape where the SEF is proposed. The applicant shall assess the species mix and characteristics found in existing tree lines, hedge rows, and wooded areas surrounding he SEF and document that the vegetative buffering is designed to emulate these characteristics. Arborvitae may be used as vegetative screening and buffering.
  - d. No less than 20% of vegetative screening plantings shall be pollinator friendly species.
  - e. Vegetative buffering shall be selected to provide year-round screening and shall be of sufficient height, density, and maturity to screen the facility from visibility, as set forth herein, within thirty-six months of the installation of the SEF.

- f. A combination of natural topography and vegetation can serve as a buffer provided that the SEF will not be visible from public roads, public parks, or existing residences or surrounding properties. Earthen berms may not be created to serve as a buffer.
- g. Visibility of SEF shall be determined as visible in a photograph taken at a point with a digital camera with an APS-C Sensor and a 35 mm focal length lens. A SEF shall be considered to not be visible provided that no more than 5% of the SEF shall be visible in accordance with the measure of visibility set forth above.
- (6) Ground-mounted SEF shall not be placed within any legal easement or right-of-way locations or be placed within any storm water conveyance systems.

## (7) Security

- a. All ground-mounted SEF's shall be completely enclosed by a minimum eight (8) foot high fence with a self-locking gate as deemed appropriate by the Borough.
- b. A clearly visible warning sign shall be placed at the base of all pad-mounted transformers and substations and every 150 linear feet surrounding the SEF informing individuals of potential voltage hazards.

#### (8) Access

- a. At a minimum a fourteen (14) foot wide stabilized access road must be provided from a state or borough roadway to the SEF site that is maintained in a dust free condition. The SEF Developer shall obtain a permit from the appropriate jurisdiction for the construction of the access road.
- b. At a minimum, a twenty (20) foot wide cartway shall be provided on the inside of the perimeter fencing between the fence and Solar Array.
- c. Spacing between Solar Array rows shall allow access for maintenance vehicles and emergency vehicles.
- (9) The ground mounted SEF shall not be artificially lighted except to the extent required for safety or applicable federal, state of local authority.

## C. Roof and Wall Mounted Principal Solar Energy Facility:

- (1) For roof and wall mounted systems, the Applicant shall provide evidence that the plans comply with the Uniform Construction Code including that the roof or wall is capable of holding the load imposed on the structure.
- (2) The total height of a building with a roof and wall mounted system shall not exceed three (3) feet above the maximum structure height.

#### **SECTION 3: REMEDIES**

- A. It shall be unlawful for any person to violate or fail to comply with or take any action which is contrary to the terms of this Ordinance, or any permit issued hereunder or cause another to violate or fail to comply, or to take any action that is contrary to the terms of this Ordinance or any permit issued hereunder.
- B. If the Borough determines that a violation of this Ordinance or any permit issued hereunder has occurred, the Borough shall serve a written notice of violation(s) upon the offending person(s).
- C. If the aforementioned notice of violation(s) is not resolved by the offending person(s) within the time period specified by the Borough therein, the Borough may initiate civil enforcement proceeding or any other remedy at law in equity, including without limitation injunctive relief, to ensure compliance with this Ordinance or any permit issued hereunder

#### **SECTION 4: ENFORCEMENT AND PENALTIES**

A. Any person authorized by the Borough may enforce the provisions of this Ordinance or any permit issued hereunder.

#### B. Civil Enforcement:

(1) When a penalty imposed for a violation of this Ordinance or any permit issued hereunder is not voluntarily paid to the Borough, the Borough may initiate civil enforcement proceedings in a court of competent jurisdiction. The civil enforcement proceeding shall be initiated by complaint or by such other means as may be provided by the Pennsylvania Rules of Civil Procedure. When enforcement is through a civil enforcement proceeding as provided herein, the Borough may seek civil penalties not to exceed Six Hundred and 00/1000 (\$600.00) per violation. In addition to, or in lieu of, civil actions, the Borough may enforce this Ordinance or any permit issued hereunder in an action in equity. In any case where a penalty for a violation of this Ordinance or any permit issued hereunder has not been timely paid and the person upon whom the penalty was imposed is found to have been liable therefore in civil proceedings, the violator shall be liable for the penalty imposed, including additional daily penalties for continuing violations, plus court costs and reasonable attorney fees incurred by the Borough in the enforcement proceedings. The Borough shall be exempt from the payment of costs in any civil case brough to enforce an Ordinance in accordance with this paragraph.

#### C. Enforcement as Summary Offense:

(1) Notwithstanding any other provision herein, the Borough may enforce this Ordinance or permit issued hereunder by action brought before a Magisterial District Judge in the same manner provided for the enforcement of summary offenses under the Pennsylvania Rules of Criminal Procedure. The Borough Solicitor may assume charge of the prosecution without the consent of the District Attorney as typically required under Pa.R.Crim.P. No. 454 (relating to trial in summary cases). The Borough may seek criminal fines not to exceed One Thousand and 00/100 (\$1,000.00) Dollars per violation and imprisonment to the extent allowed by law for the punishment of summary offenses.

## D. Separate Offenses:

- (1) A Separate offense shall arise for each day or portion thereof in which a violation of this Ordinance or any permit issued hereunder is found to exist or for each Section or subsection of this Ordinance or any permit issued hereunder which is found to have been violated.
- E. All fines and penalties collected for this violation of this Ordinance or any permit issued hereunder shall be paid to the Borough Treasurer.

**SECTION 5:** Severability. The provisions of this Ordinance are declared to be severable, and if any section subsection, sentence, clause, or part thereof is, for any reason, held to be invalid to unconstitutional by a court of competent jurisdiction, such decision shall not affect the validity of any remaining sections, subsections, sentences, clauses, or part of this ordinance.

**SECTION 6:** Effective Date. This Ordinance shall take effect in accordance with law. This Ordinance shall take effect five (5) days after enactment.

Duly presented, ordained, and enacted at a regular meeting of the Utica Borough Council on the	
day of	, 2024
ATTEST:	Borough of Utica, County of Venango, Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
Marian Murphy, Secretary/Treasurer Utica Borough	By: Tod Elford, Utica Borough Council President
	By: MaryAnn Schell, Utica Borough Mayor