

## § 1. Title

This Local Law will be referred to as, "Local Law No. 3 of 2022 - Solar Energy Systems."

## § 2. Legislative authority

This chapter is adopted pursuant to the legislative authority in Municipal Home Rule Law § 10, Town Law §§ 261 through 264, General Municipal Law § 96-a and § 119-dd and Public Service Law, Article 10.

## § 3. Purpose and intent

A. The purpose of this Solar Energy Systems Local Law is to advance and protect the public health, safety, and welfare of Gaines by regulating the installation and use of solar energy generating systems and equipment, with the following objectives:

- 1) To take advantage of a safe, abundant, renewable and non-polluting energy resource;
- 2) To decrease the cost of electricity to the owners of residential and commercial properties, including single-family houses;
- 3) To increase employment and business development in the Town of Gaines, to the extent reasonably practical, by furthering the installation of Solar Energy Systems; and
- 4) To mitigate the impacts of Solar Energy Systems on environmental resources and agricultural land.

## § 4. Definitions

**APPLICANT:** The person or entity submitting an application and seeking an approval under this Article; the owner of a Solar Energy System or a proposed Solar Energy System project; the operator of Solar Energy System or a proposed Solar Energy System project; any person acting on behalf of an Applicant, Solar Energy System or proposed Solar Energy System. Whenever the term "applicant" or "owner" or "operator" are used in this Article, said term shall include any person acting as an applicant, owner or operator of such Solar Energy System.

**ABANDONMENT:** A solar energy system that has no produced electrical energy for 12 months and must be removed from the property.

**BATTERY ENERGY STORAGE SYSTEM:** One or more devices, assembled together, capable of storing energy in order to supply electrical energy at a future time, not to include a stand-alone 12-volt car battery or an electric motor vehicle. A battery energy storage system is classified as a Tier 1 or Tier 2 Battery Energy Storage System as follows:

- (1) Tier 1 Battery Energy Storage Systems have an aggregate energy capacity less than or equal to 600kWh and, if in a room or enclosed area, consist of only a single energy storage system technology.
- (2) Tier 2 Battery Energy Storage Systems have an aggregate energy capacity greater than 600kWh or are comprised of more than one storage battery technology in a room or enclosed area.

**BUILDING-INTEGRATED PHOTOVOLTAIC SYSTEM:** A combination of Solar Panels and Solar Energy Equipment integrated into any building envelope system such as vertical facades, semitransparent skylight systems, roofing materials, or shading over windows, which produce electricity for onsite consumption.

**BUILDING-MOUNTED SOLAR ENERGY SYSTEM (onsite use):** Any Solar Energy System that is affixed to the side(s) or rear of a Building or other Structure either directly or by means of support structures or other mounting devices, intended to produce energy for onsite consumption or credit for onsite consumption for a building, single-family residence, multi-family residence or business, but not including those mounted to the roof or top surface of a Building. (See definition of Roof-Mounted Solar Energy System)

**BUSINESS:** An organization or enterprising entity engaged in commercial, limited industrial, or professional activities that provide employment opportunities and broadens the tax base.

**COMMERCIAL BUILDING-MOUNTED SOLAR ENERGY SYSTEM (offsite use):** Any Solar Energy System that is affixed to the side(s) or rear of a Building or other Structure either directly or by means of support structures or other mounting devices, intended to produce energy for offsite sale to and consumption by one or more customers.

**COMMERCIAL ROOF-MOUNTED SOLAR ENERGY SYSTEM (offsite use):** A Solar Energy System mounted on the roof of any legally permitted Building or Structure and wholly contained within the limits of the roof surface, intended to produce energy for offsite sale to and consumption by one or more customers.

**DECOMMISSIONING:** The removal and disposal of all Solar Panels, Solar Energy Equipment, Structures, equipment and accessories, including subsurface foundations and all other material, concrete, wiring, cabling, or debris, that were installed in connection with a Solar Energy System and the restoration of the parcel of land to the original state prior to construction on which the Solar Energy System is built to either of the following, at the landowner's (either the Initial Landowner or it's heirs, successors or assigns) sole option: (i) the condition such lands were in prior to the development, construction and operation of the Solar Energy System, including but not limited to restoration, regrading, and reseeded, or (ii) the condition designed by landowner (either the Initial Landowner or it's heirs, successors or assigns) and the Town. Details of the expected Decommissioning activities and costs are to be described in the Decommissioning Plan and Decommissioning Agreement as may be required pursuant to this Article.

**DECOMMISSIONING AGREEMENT:** A written Agreement between Applicant, Initial Landowner and Town that sets forth the obligations of the Applicant and/or the Initial Landowner to properly decommission the Solar Energy System if the use of such system is discontinued, abandoned or becomes inoperable.

**FARMLAND OF STATEWIDE IMPORTANCE:** Land designated as "Farmland of Statewide Importance" in the US Department of Agriculture Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)'s Soil Survey Geographic (SSURGO) Database on Web Soil Survey, that is of statewide importance for the production of food, fiber, forage and oilseed crops as determined by the appropriate state agency or agencies.

**FARM OPERATION:** Land and on-farm buildings, equipment, facilities, and practices which contribute to the production, preparation, and marketing of crops, livestock, and livestock products as a commercial enterprise (in accordance with Agriculture & Markets Law § 301[11])

**GLARE:** The effect by reflections of light with intensity sufficient as determined in a commercially reasonable manner to cause annoyance, discomfort, or loss in visual performance and visibility in any material respects.

**GROUND DISTURBANCE:** Any activity that contributes to soil compaction, alters the soil profile or removes vegetative cover, therefore, is susceptible to erosion

**GROUND-MOUNTED SOLAR ENERGY SYSTEM:** A solar energy system that is anchored to the ground and attached to a pole or other mounting system that is detached from any other structure and which generates electricity for onsite or offsite consumption.

**INITIAL LANDOWNER:** The record title owner to the real property upon which a Solar Energy Systems is constructed, at the time such Solar Energy System is originally constructed.

**LARGE-SCALE SOLAR ENERGY SYSTEM:** A solar energy system that is ground-mounted and produces energy primarily for the purpose of on-site usage or consumption, with lot coverage of more than 4,000 sq. ft.

**LOT COVERAGE:** The land area occupied by a ground-mounted solar energy system. Lot coverage encompasses the entire area of the solar array, including spaces between the solar panels, as well as all fences, roadways, parking, structures and equipment.

**MINERAL SOIL GROUPS 1-4 (MSG 1-4):** Soils recognized by the New York State (NYS) Department of Agriculture and Markets as having the highest value based on soil productivity and capability, in accordance with the uniform statewide land classification system developed for the NYS Agricultural Assessment Program.

**NATIVE PERENNIAL VEGETATION:** Native wildflowers, forbs, and grasses that serve as habitat, forage, and

migratory way stations for Pollinators and shall not include any prohibited or regulated invasive species as determined by the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation.

**NAMEPLATE CAPACITY:** A solar energy system's maximum electric power output under optimal operating conditions. Nameplate Capacity may be expressed in terms of Alternating Current (AC) or Direct Current (DC).

**NEIGHBORHOOD:** A collection of 8 or more houses (residential dwellings) within a 1-mile boundary with similar housing types and market values. The 1-mile boundary is measured from the start of the first house to the start of the last house in that 1-mile boundary.

**PRIME FARMLAND:** Land, designated as "Prime Farmland" in the US Department of Agriculture Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)'s Soil Survey Geographic (SSURGO) Database that has the best combination of physical and chemical characteristics for producing food, feed, forage, fiber and oilseed crops and is also available for these uses. It has the soil quality, growing season and moisture supply needed to produce economically sustained high yields of crops when treated and managed according to acceptable farming methods, including water management. In general, Prime Farmlands have an adequate and dependable water supply from precipitation or irrigation, a favorable temperature and growing season, acceptable acidity or alkalinity, acceptable salt and sodium content and few or no rocks. They are permeable to water and air. Prime Farmlands are not excessively erodible or saturated with water for a long period of time, and they either do not flood frequently or are protected from flooding.

**POLLINATOR:** Bees, birds, bats, and other insects or wildlife that pollinate flowering plants, and includes both wild and managed insects.

**ROOF-MOUNTED SOLAR ENERGY SYSTEM:** A solar energy system, located on the roof of any legally permitted building or structure, which produces electricity for on-site or off-site consumption. S

**ROOF-MOUNTED LARGE-SCALE SOLAR ENERGY SYSTEM:** A large-scale roof-mounted solar (PV) system is prohibited from being mounted upon the roof of any legally permitted Building or Structure and wholly contained within the limits of the roof surface, intended to produce energy for onsite consumption or credit for onsite consumption for a building, a single-family detached dwelling, a multi-family structure, a commercial or industrial building, or a farm building

**SOLAR ACCESS:** Space open to the sun and clear of overhangs or shade so as to permit the uses of active and/or passive Solar Energy Systems on individual properties.

**SOLAR ENERGY SYSTEM:** An electrical generating system composed of a combination of both solar panels and solar energy equipment.

**SOLAR ENERGY EQUIPMENT:** Electrical energy devices, material, hardware, inverters, or other electrical equipment and conduit, not to include any type of battery energy storage system or similar device, that are used with Solar Panels to produce and distribute electricity.

**SOLAR FARM:** A Solar Energy System that generates electricity primarily for off-site sale, usage or consumption.

**SOLAR PANEL:** A photovoltaic device capable of collecting and converting solar energy into electrical energy.

**STORAGE BATTERY -** A device that stores energy and makes it available in an electrical form.

**TILT -** The vertical angle, where 0° minimum tilt means the panel is lying flat, and 90° maximum tilt means that it is vertical.

**TOWN -** The Town of Gaines, Orleans County, New York.

**WETLAND DISTURBANCE (TEMPORARY):** Temporary impacts occur when fill and/or cut impacts occur in wetlands that are restored to preconstruction contours when construction activities are complete.

**WETLAND DISTURBANCE (PERMANENT):** Permanent impacts occur when fill and/or cut impacts occur in wetlands that are not restored to the preconstruction state.

## § 5. Applicability

A. The requirements of this Local Law apply to all solar energy systems and/or solar farms proposed, installed, operated, maintained, modified or constructed in Gaines after the effective date of this Local Law, excluding general maintenance and repair.

B. Solar Energy Systems constructed or installed prior to the effective date of this Local Law are not required to meet the requirements of this Local Law.

C. All Solar Energy Systems must be designed, erected, and installed in accordance with all applicable codes, regulations, and industry standards as referenced in the NYS Uniform Fire Prevention and Building Code (“Building Code”), the NYS Energy Conservation Code (“Energy Code”), and the Town of Gaines local laws and ordinances.

## § 6. Solar energy systems as an accessory use or structure

A. Roof-mounted solar energy systems.

(1) Roof-mounted solar energy systems are permitted as an accessory use in all zoning districts when attached to any lawfully permitted building or structure.

(2) Height. Roof-mounted solar energy systems must not exceed the maximum height restrictions for buildings in the zoning district within which they are located and are provided the same height exemptions granted to building-mounted mechanical devices or equipment.

(3) Aesthetics. Roof-mounted solar energy system installations must incorporate, when feasible, the following design requirements: panels facing the front yard must be mounted at the same angle as the roof's surface with a maximum distance of 18 inches between the roof and highest edge of the system.

(4) Roof-mounted solar energy systems that use the energy on-site are not subject to Site Plan Review pursuant to the Town's zoning regulations.

(5) Roof-mounted installations may be installed on buildings in all zoning districts, subject to applicable permit requirements and New York State building codes.

B. Ground-mounted solar energy systems as an accessory use.

(1) Ground-mounted solar energy systems that use the electricity primarily on site are permitted as accessory structures and must be installed to the side or rear of the principal building on the lot.

(2) Setback. Ground-mounted solar energy systems must be set back a minimum of 100 feet from the centerline of the road except that the minimum front setback along Ridge Road is 120 feet. The minimum setback from the side and rear lot lines is 50 feet, except that solar energy systems must be set back a minimum of 100 feet from the boundary of the Commercial Historic District.

(3) Height. Ground-mounted panels must not exceed fifteen (15) feet as measured from the highest point of any Solar Panel (oriented at maximum tilt) or Solar Energy Equipment to the ground directly beneath it.

(4) Lot coverage. Lot coverage for solar energy systems, plus the area occupied by any other structure, driveway, or paved or impervious surface, must not exceed 80% of the lot area.

(5) Ground-mounted solar energy systems are permitted in all zoning districts.

(6) Site Plan Review is required for ground-mounted solar energy systems with lot coverage of 4,000 sq. ft. or more

## § 7. Application and approval standards for large-scale solar energy systems

A. Solar energy systems with lot coverage of 4,000 sq. ft. or more but less than 40,000 sq. ft. are permitted in the AR Agricultural Residential and C Commercial zoning districts subject to Site Plan Review in accordance with the Town of Gaines Zoning Ordinance.

B. Solar energy systems with lot coverage of 40,000 sq. ft. or more are permitted in the AR Agricultural

Residential and C Commercial Zoning Districts, subject to a Special Use Permit and Site Plan Review in accordance with the Town of Gaines Zoning Ordinance.

C. Application requirements. Any application for a large-scale solar energy system must include the following documentation:

- (1) Application for Special Use Permit and Site Plan Review and Approval, completed and signed by the applicant.
- (2) Application checklist completed and signed by the applicant.
- (3) A letter of intent describing the proposed project, details of the size, scope, and impact of the project; as well as how the application complies with all the requirements of the local zoning code. The applicant should clearly state if the project will propose a localized Battery Energy Storage System on site, and if so, how is this in compliance with the local zoning code.
- (4) If the property of the proposed project is to be leased, legal consent between all parties specifying the use(s) of the land for the duration of the project, including easements, leased area, and other agreements, must be submitted.
- (5) A plat map should be submitted to support the language of the lease to establish the leased area.
- (6) If there is an active lease on the property the owner of the property must provide a U.S. Department of Agriculture Farm Service Agency documentation of any active leases on the property. If there is not an active lease, then the owner of the property must submit a signed and notarized affidavit stating that there are no active leases on said property.
- (7) A complete Coordinated Electric System Interconnection Review (CESIR) should be presented to the Planning Board without redactions for review. This should be accompanied with a letter from the applicant's engineer stating that the interconnection point has been reviewed and vetted and will be able to handle the physical stress of interconnection.
- (8) Engineer drawings and maps showing the layout of the solar energy system signed by a professional engineer or registered architect are required. These at a minimum should include the following:
  - (a) Existing Site Map;
  - (b) Proposed Clearing Plan (if applicable);
  - (c) Proposed Site Plan and Layout;
  - (d) Utility Plan;
  - (e) Grading Plan;
  - (f) Erosion and Sediment Control Plan;
  - (g) Landscaping Plan; and
  - (h) Detail Sheets.
- (9) Location of drainage tile and proof of the registered location of the drainage tile per the records at the Orleans County Soil and Water Conservation District Office. If there are no records of drainage tile a field study to confirm the absence of any drainage tile in the location proposed to be developed is required. Development within the area of drainage tile is prohibited, only areas without drainage tile are allowed to be developed.
- (10) A Wetland Delineation Report should be prepared and Identify the size, location, and jurisdiction of all wetland found on, or immediately adjacent to the proposed lot to be developed. It should also be identified if there will be permanent or temporary disturbance to the wetlands prior to, during, and after the construction phase of the project. If construction is to occur within or adjacent to a state or federal wetland coordination with the regulating body for that wetland is to be provided to the Planning Board for review.

(11) The equipment specification sheets must be documented and submitted for all photovoltaic panels, significant components, mounting systems and inverters that are to be installed.

(12) Property operations and maintenance plan. Such plan must describe continuing photovoltaic maintenance property upkeep such as mowing and trimming.

#### D. Standards.

(1) Setback. Large-scale solar energy systems must be set back a minimum of 300 feet from the centerline of the road to the closest point on the perimeter fence. The minimum setback from the side and rear lot lines will be 300 feet, except that Large-scale solar energy systems must be set back a minimum of 1.13 miles from the boundary of the Commercial Historic District. In locations adjacent to a neighborhood the front setback is to be 300 feet from the centerline of the road, the side and rear lot line setbacks are to be 300 feet from the closest neighboring property line to the closest perimeter fence line.

(2) Height. Ground-mounted panels must not exceed fifteen (15) feet as measured from the highest point of any Solar Panel (oriented at maximum tilt) or Solar Energy Equipment to the ground directly beneath it.

(3) Lot size. Large-scale solar energy systems must be located on lots with a minimum lot size of three (3) acres.

(4) Lot coverage. The lot coverage of a large-scale solar energy system that is ground-mounted must not exceed 60% of the lot on which it is installed. The lot coverage of any ground-mounted solar energy system includes all equipment and site improvements necessary or required for the system, including but not limited to the solar array, spaces between the solar panels, fences, roadways, driveways, and parking areas.

(5) All large-scale energy systems must be enclosed by fencing to prevent unauthorized access. Warning signs with the owner's contact information must be placed on the entrance and perimeter of the fencing. The type of fencing must be specified in the application. The Planning Board may require additional screening, fencing or landscaping to avoid adverse aesthetic impacts.

(6) All applications must comply with all applicable Site Plan Review requirements specified in the Town's Zoning Ordinance.

(7) The Planning Board may impose conditions on its approval of the Site Plan as needed to enforce the standards in this local law or to mitigate or minimize any potential environmental impacts identified during the State Environmental Quality Review (SEQR) process.

## § 8. Additional Requirements for Solar Farms

A. This section establishes standards for the placement, design, construction, operation, monitoring, modification and removal of Solar Farms.

B. In addition to any site plan approval required by the Gaines Planning Board for systems with 4,000 sq. ft. or more of lot coverage, a special use permit is required for a solar farm with 40,000 sq. ft. or more of lot coverage. The Planning Board will evaluate each proposed solar farm on a case-by-case basis and will consider neighborhood characteristics, topography, and potential impact to residents, business and community character in determining whether to issue the Special Use Permit.

C. The following application information is required to be submitted with an application for a Solar Farm:

(1) Engineer drawings of the solar photovoltaic installation signed by a licensed professional engineer showing the proposed layout of the system and any potential shading from nearby structures.

(2) Proposed changes to the landscape of site, grading, vegetation clearing and planting, exterior lighting, screening vegetation or structures.

(3) A description of the solar farm facility and the technical, economic and other reasons for the proposed location and design. Certification prepared and signed by a licensed professional engineer that the solar farm complies with all applicable federal and state standards.

(4) One- or three-phase line electrical diagram detailing the solar farm layout, solar collector installation, associated components, and electrical interconnection methods, with all National Electrical Code compliant disconnects and overcurrent devices.

(5) Documentation of the major system components to be used, including the PV panels, mounting system and inverter.

(6) An operation and maintenance plan which must include measures for maintaining safe access to the installation, stormwater controls, as well as general procedures for operational maintenance of the installation.

(7) Information on noise (inverter) and reflectivity/glare of solar panels and identify potential impacts to abutters.

(8) If the property of the proposed project is to be leased, legal consent between all parties specifying the use(s) of the land for the duration of the project, including easements and other agreements must be submitted.

D. The following standards are minimum requirements for solar farms:

(1) For solar farms with lot coverage of 4,000 sq. ft. or more, the minimum lot size is three (3) acres.

(2) Setback. Ground-mounted solar energy systems must be set back a minimum of 100 feet from the centerline of the road except that the minimum front setback along Ridge Road is 120 feet. The minimum setback from the side and rear lot lines is 50 feet, except that solar energy systems must be set back a minimum of 100 feet from the boundary of the Commercial Historic District.

(3) Height. The maximum height for ground-mounted solar systems must not exceed fifteen (15) feet as measured from the highest point of any Solar Panel (oriented at maximum tilt) or Solar Energy Equipment to the ground directly beneath it.

(4) All mechanical equipment on a solar farm, including any structure for batteries or storage cells, must be completely enclosed by a minimum eight-foot-high fence with a self-locking gate. Personnel gates should be installed every 300-feet around the fenced perimeter. These personnel gates should not be obstructed to allow egress from the solar facility.

(5) An Emergency Vehicle Pull-Off is required for access roads that exceed 500-feet in length and at 500-foot maximum space intervals.

(6) Access roads should be designed to support loads of no less than 75,000 pounds or greater.

(7) A buffer within the fenced in area between the solar panel array and the perimeter fence of at least 20-feet is to remain debris free and capable of supporting at least 7,000 pounds.

(8) The lot coverage of the solar farm must not exceed 60% of the total parcel area and no greater than 25% of Prime Farmland and Farmland of Statewide Importance may be developed on or over for large-scale solar energy systems. It is the intent of this restriction to protect the valuable resource and benefits of Prime Farmland and Farmland of Statewide Importance and it is the express intention of the Town of Gaines that no variance or hardship request be granted to permit increased coverage by large-scale solar energy systems on Prime Farmland and/or Farmland of Statewide Importance by any board or commission or other agency having legal authority to consider and grant such a variance or hardship request.

(9) A Geotechnical review of the site and geotechnical review is required as part of the application materials. 1 test bore is required to be performed per acre, at a minimum. After the geotechnical survey of the site is complete the bores are to be replaced and site repaired to prevent any threat to human health.

(10) A vegetated perimeter buffer must provide year-round screening of the system from adjacent properties. This must include evergreen vegetation and be maintained for the life of the project. Any and all proposed trees must be at minimum 8-feet at the time of planting. Due to the location and conditions in the Town of Gaines Cedar Trees should not be proposed for vegetative screening.

(11) Applications shall include a visual impact study of the proposed large-scale solar energy system as installed, which may include a computerized photographic simulation, demonstrating any visual impacts from strategic vantage points. Color photographs of the proposed Site from locations that accurately depicting the existing conditions shall be included. The visual analysis shall also indicate the color treatment of the system's components and any visual screening incorporated into the project that is intended to lessen the system's visual prominence. This should depict the proposed vegetative buffer at the time of planting, five (5), ten (10), Twenty (20) years.

(11) All solar energy production systems must be designed and located to prevent reflective glare toward any habitable buildings, as well as toward streets, driveways and vehicular access rights-of-way.

(12) All on-site utility and transmission lines must be, to the extent feasible, placed underground.

(13) The installation of a clearly visible warning sign concerning voltage must be placed at the base of all pad-mounted transformers and substations.

(14) The system must be designed and situated to be compatible with the existing uses on adjacent and nearby properties.

(15) All appurtenant structures, including but not limited to equipment shelters, storage facilities, transformers and substations, must be architecturally compatible with each other and must be screened from view from neighboring parcels and streets.

(16) All proposed ground cover vegetation within the perimeter fenced in area is to be maintained to not exceed a height of 10 inches. The vegetation height should be recorded (visual evidence along with maintenance report) prior to any maintenance (mowing, trimming) and reported to the Town within 48 hours of the maintenance event.

(17) Vegetation Clearing. Cutting of trees on any lot for the placement of a Large-Scale Solar Energy System shall be limited to 2.0 percent of the total lot acreage. Only 0.5 percent of the proposed trees to be cut can be six (6) inches and greater in diameter. A tree survey will be required for all proposed cutting, this should include the limits of clearing, as well as the proposed limb trimming that will be proposed to allow for the optimum solar exposure.

(18) Lighting of solar farms must be consistent with all state and federal laws. Lighting of appurtenant structures will be limited to that required for safety and operational purposes and must be reasonably shielded from abutting properties. Where feasible, lighting must be directed downward and must incorporate full cutoff fixtures to reduce light pollution.

(19) No signs are permitted except announcement signs, such as "no trespassing" signs or signs required to warn of danger. A sign no larger than eight (8) sq. ft. in area is required that identifies the owner and operator with an emergency telephone number where the owner and operator can be reached on a twenty-four-hour basis. Signage provisions in the Town Zoning or other laws, regulations and/or ordinances, State building code requirements, and Federal standards including the National Electrical Code and/or Emergency Services, will prevail over the requirements in this subsection in the event that a conflict arises.

(20) A minimum of one parking space must be provided in connection with the maintenance of the solar energy facility and the site. However, it must not be used for the permanent storage of vehicles.

(21) The applicant is responsible to notify the residence within a half (0.5) mile from the proposed project site of the project when the Planning Board officially accepts the application for review and authorizes the applicant to do so, as well as notify the same residence of the date of the public hearing for the application. Both notifications will be required to be sent by certified mail, and proof of receipt will be required to be sent to the Planning Board for review. All residence information should be coordinated with the County to assure that it is as accurate as possible, failure to submit to a verified list may require resubmittal.

(22) A Road use statement is required to identify the possible routes that the applicant will be using to deliver the materials and equipment to the proposed site. This is to be sent to the Town and Town Highway Superintendent for review. If any Town roads are to be used they will first require authorization from the Town Highway Superintendent and enter into a Road Use Maintenance Agreement with the Town. This agreement will need to be approved by the Town Board with recommendations from the Highway



Superintendent.

#### E. Safety and Maintenance Requirements

(1) The solar farm owner or operator must provide a copy of the project summary, electrical schematic and site plan to the local Fire Chief. Upon request, the owner or operator must cooperate with local emergency services in developing an emergency response plan. All means of shutting down the solar farm facility must be clearly marked. The owner or operator must identify a responsible person for public inquiries through the life of the installation.

(2) No solar farm will be approved or constructed until evidence has been given to Gaines that the utility company operating the electrical grid where the installation is to be located has authorized the interconnected customer-owner generator.

(3) A solar farm owner or operator must maintain the facility in good condition. Maintenance must include, but not be limited to, painting, structural repairs and integrity of security measures. Site access must be maintained to a level acceptable to the local Fire Chief and emergency medical services. The owner or operator must be responsible for the cost of maintaining the solar farm and any access road(s), unless accepted as a public way. All vegetative maintenance, including ground cover, vegetative buffer, and existing site vegetation is to be maintained for the life of the project according to the Special Use Permit.

(4) The applicant is to prepare a detailed plan for the dismantling, reuse, recycling, and disposal of all components on the project parcel. This should clearly identify where the components will be stored, how the components will be removed from the site, what precautions are required, and the location of the closest facility to reuse, recycle, or dispose of the component will be. No overnight storage of the components that are not being used for energy generation are allowed. This should be provided prior to issuance of a building permit. This document should be kept current and all updates are to be sent to the Town within 30-days of any changes, or be at risk for revocation of the Special Use Permit. This document is to be referenced specifically in the Decommissioning Plan.

#### F. Transfer

(1) No transfer of any large-scale solar energy system or Special Use Permit, nor sale of the entity owning such facility including the sale of more than 30% of the stock of such entity (not counting sales of shares on a public exchange), will occur without prior approval of the Town, which approval shall be granted upon written acceptance of the transferee of the obligations of the transferor under this Section, and the transferee's demonstration, in the sole discretion of the Town Board, that it can meet the technical and financial obligations of the transferor. No transfer shall eliminate the liability of the transferor nor of any other party under this Section unless the entire interest of the transferor in all facilities in the Town is transferred and there no outstanding obligations or violations.

## § 9. Battery Energy Storage Systems

All requirements for the placement of Battery Energy Storage Systems (BESS) alongside a Solar Energy System will be required to comply with all the requirements within Local Law No. 2 of 2022 of the Town of Gaines.

## § 10. Safety

#### A. Solar Energy Systems

(1) Solar Energy Systems and Solar Energy Equipment shall be certified under the applicable electrical and/or building codes as required.

(2) Solar Energy Systems shall be maintained in good working order and in accordance with industry standards. Site access shall be maintained, including snow removal at a level acceptable to the local fire department and, if the Large-Scale Solar Energy System is located in an ambulance district, the local ambulance corps.

(3) If a Battery Energy Storage System is included as part of the Solar Energy System, they shall meet the requirements of Local Law No. 2 of 2022 of the Town of Gaines Battery Energy Storage Systems of this

local zoning code, any applicable fire prevention and building code when in use and, when no longer used, shall be disposed of in accordance with the laws and regulations of the Town of Gaines and any applicable federal, state, or county laws or regulations.

(4) Where deemed necessary by the Planning Board, the Applicant shall ensure emergency access to the Facility Area for local first responders by installing an emergency lock box or similar device, in a location subject to approval by the Town of Gaines Code Enforcement Officer, Local Fire Chief(s), and Orleans County Office of Emergency Management.

## § 11. Abandonment and decommissioning

### A. Large-Scale Solar Energy Systems and/or Solar Energy Farm

(1) A large-scale solar energy systems and/or solar energy farm will be considered abandoned after six months without consistent electrical energy generation and must be removed from the property. The Gaines Planning Board may grant an extension for a period of up to six months after such abandonment.

(2) All applications for any large-scale solar energy system and/or solar energy farm must include a decommissioning plan that includes the following components:

(a) An affirmative obligation that after any large-scale solar energy system and/or solar energy farm can no longer be used it will be removed by the applicant and/or any subsequent owner.

(b) Description of how the removal of all infrastructure and the remediation of soil and vegetation will be conducted to return the parcel to its original state prior to construction. Include an expected time line for execution and completion.

(c) An itemized cost estimate detailing the projected expense of executing the decommissioning plan, prepared by and stamped by a New York State Licensed professional engineer or registered architect. No salvage value should be included with the decommissioning estimate. The estimate shall include not only the removal of all infrastructure, but also roadways, landscaping, installation of temporary erosion and sediment control measures, stabilization of the site, preparation of a project SWPPP, permitting, observation, and disposal costs.

(d) Prior to obtaining a building permit and as a condition to issuance of any Special Use Permit, the Applicant and Initial Landowner must enter into a Decommissioning Agreement with the Town that sets forth the obligations of the Applicant and/or the Initial Landowner to properly decommission the Solar Energy System if the use of such system is discontinued, abandoned or becomes inoperable. Said Decommissioning Agreement shall require the Applicant to provide an irrevocable financial security bond (or other form of surety acceptable to the Town of Gaines at its discretion) for the removal of the Solar Energy System, with Gaines as the designated assignee/beneficiary, in an amount approved by the Planning Board which is equal to 125% of the estimated removal cost. The bond or surety shall provide for an annual increase in the amount of the surety to compensate for the cost of inflation or any other anticipated increase in costs of removal. Each year after a Solar Energy System has been constructed, and no later than sixty (60) days prior to the anniversary date of the issuance of the building permit for such system, the then owner/permit holder for the system shall provide the Town of Gaines with written proof that the required financial security bond (or other form of surety) is still operable and valid and that such surety has been properly increased to account for inflation or any other anticipated increase in costs of removal as provided for above. The Decommissioning Agreement shall provide that Initial Landowner (or the successor and/or assigns of Initial Landowner) shall be responsible for all obligations pursuant to the Decommissioning Agreement in the event Applicant (or the successor owner of the Solar Energy System) does not complete all obligations as required by said Decommissioning Agreement. The Decommissioning Agreement shall be recorded at the office of the Orleans County Clerk and shall be indexed as deed restrictions against the property upon which the Solar Energy System is constructed, with the Town as a benefitted party, so as to put all future owners of the subject real property on notice of the obligations contained in the Decommissioning Agreement.

(e) Obligate the owner, operator and/or successors in interest to remove any ground-mounted solar collectors which have reached the end of their useful life or have been abandoned; they must physically remove the installation no more than six months after the date of discontinued operations and they must

notify Gaines by certified mail of the proposed date of discontinued operations and plans for removal.

(f) An obligation to physically removal all ground-mounted solar collectors, structures, equipment, security barriers and transmission lines from the site.

(g) An obligation to dispose of all solid and hazardous waste in accordance with local, state and federal waste disposal regulations.

(h) Preliminary photos prior to construction that clearly identify the visual impact of the site prior to construction. This should be performed during dry, sunny weather, without any snow ground cover, and show the whole site, not just the project area.

(i) A draft site plan for the decommissioning of the site. This draft site plan is to depict the proposed removal of the solar collection equipment and all other additions to the site as a result of the proposed project. This should note a sequence of decommissioning, current SWPPP requirements, and a statement that this site plan is to be updated and submitted to the Town prior to the decommissioning of the site and the site plan will be updated to comply with all current local, state, and federal requirements.

(3) Upon cessation of electricity generation of a Solar Farm or Large-Scale Solar Facility on a continuous basis for 6 months, the Gaines Planning Board will notify and instruct the owner and/or operator of the Solar Energy System to implement the decommissioning plan. The decommissioning plan must be completed within six months of notification. If the owner or operator of any large-scale solar energy system and/or any solar farm fails to remove the installation in accordance with the decommissioning plan within six months of abandonment or the proposed date of decommissioning, Gaines may enter the property and physically remove the installation upon application to a court of appropriate jurisdiction to obtain access to the property for that purpose.

(4) If the Gaines Planning Board approves an application for a solar farm, the applicant must provide or establish a bond, surety bond, financial deposit, undertaking, financial escrow or other financial security to ensure that sufficient funds are available to remove the installation and restore landscaping in the event that the applicant fails to comply with its decommissioning obligations. The Planning Board will review the form and amount of financial security annually. To assist in this review, the owner or operator must provide financial documentation, financial statements or any other information requested by said Board to ensure the sufficiency of the financial security. Gaines reserves the right to request reasonable access to the property upon notice and consent.

## § 12. Permit Timeframe

The Special Use Permit and site plan approval for all Solar Energy Systems shall be valid for a period of 12 months, provided that a building permit is issued for construction. In the event construction is not completed in accordance with the final site plan – as may have been amended and approved – as required by the Planning Board, within 12 months, the applicant may request to extend the time to obtain a building permit for 6 months, this may be performed at the most twice before the approval shall expire. Approval of a request to extend the time to complete construction shall not be unreasonably withheld by the Town of Gaines. If the owner and/or operator fails to perform substantial construction within 24 months, the approvals shall expire.

## § 13. Enforcement

Any violation of this chapter will be subject to the same civil and criminal penalties provided for in the Gaines Town Code, including any applicable zoning regulations, and/or the laws of the State of New York.

A. Inspections. Upon reasonable notice, the Town of Gaines Code Enforcement Officer, or his or her designee, may enter a Lot on which a Commercial or Large-Scale Solar Energy System has been approved for the purpose of determining compliance with any requirements or conditions of this Article or any approval given or permit issued pursuant to this Article. Twenty-four (24) hour notice by telephone to the owner/operator or designated contact person shall be deemed reasonable notice. Furthermore, a Commercial or Large-Scale Solar Energy System shall be inspected by a New York State licensed Professional Engineer that has been approved by the Town of Gaines at any time upon a determination by

the Town's Code Enforcement Officer that damage to such system may have occurred, and a copy of the written inspection report shall be submitted to the Code Enforcement Officer. Any fee or expense associated with this inspection shall be borne entirely by the permit holder and shall be reimbursed to the Town of Gaines within thirty 30 days after delivery to the permit holder of an invoice substantiating such charges. Any failure to pay such reimbursable charges may result in revocation of any Special Use Permit granted. The Town of Gaines reserves the right to levy all such un-reimbursed expenses onto the real property tax bill associated with the real property upon which the Commercial or Large-Scale Solar Energy System is located.

B. Annual Reporting. The Commercial or Large-Scale Solar Energy System owner shall, on a yearly basis from the date of the certificate of compliance issued by the Code Enforcement Officer (CEO), provide the CEO a written report identifying the rated capacity of the system and the amount of electricity that was generated by the system and transmitted to the grid over the most recent twelve-month period. The annual report shall show:

- (1) All restrictions, if any, that were placed upon the Commercial or Large-Scale Solar Energy System imposed by identified factors beyond the control of the system operator;
- (2) All changes to solar panels used and the reasons therefor;
- (3) The number, location, and kind (by manufacturer and model) of said changes to solar panels or other equipment used;
- (4) Site plantings needing replacement and identify the plan for their replacement;
- (5) Any change of ownership or operator of the system and/or ownership of the lot/parcel upon which the Commercial or Large-Scale Solar Energy System is located; and
- (6) Any change in the party(ies) responsible for decommissioning and removal of the Commercial or Large-Scale Solar Energy System.
- (7) The renewal information regarding the decommissioning surety and the decommissioning surety review will need to be provide for review. The applicant will be obligated to ensure that the decommissioning value is keeping with current values and if there is any value change upon the annual review/certification this will need to be identified in writing to the Town, provide a revised decommissioning estimate for review, and proposed revised decommissioning agreement with the revised decommissioning value.

## § 14. Severability and/or validity

If any clause, sentence, paragraph, subdivision, section or part of this chapter, or the application thereof to any person, individual, firm or corporation, or circumstance, is found by any court of competent jurisdiction to be invalid or unconstitutional, such order or judgment will not affect, impair or invalidate the remainder thereof, but will be confined to the clause, sentence, paragraph, subdivision, section or part of this chapter, or in its application to the person, individual, firm or corporation, or circumstance, directly involved in the controversy in which said order or judgment will be rendered.

## § 15. Effective Date

This chapter will take effect upon the date it is filed in the Office of the New York State Secretary of State in accordance with the Municipal Home Rule Law § 27.