



Albemarle County

Legislation Text

File #: 22-423, **Version:** 1

AGENDA DATE: 9/21/2022

TITLE:

Utility Grade Solar Presentation

SUBJECT/PROPOSAL/REQUEST: Proposal to engage consultant to assist with the development of standards for Utility Grade Solar Facilities

ITEM TYPE: Regular Action Item

STAFF CONTACT(S): Walker, Filardo, Rapp, Clark, Fritz

PRESENTER (S): Bill Fritz

LEGAL REVIEW: Not Required

REVIEWED BY: Jeffrey B. Richardson

BACKGROUND: On June 14, 2017, the Board of Supervisors amended the Zoning Ordinance to permit “solar energy systems” in the Rural Areas by special use permit (SP). When the ordinance was amended it was noted that, “[s]uch requests would be reviewed following the County’s standard SP review process, considering the factors outlined in the Zoning Ordinance relative to the review of all SPs (§18.33.8), and allowing for in-depth review of potential site-specific impacts such as: visibility and screening, glare and reflectivity, reversibility, stormwater runoff, tree and habitat loss, noise, setbacks, security fencing, impacts to natural, cultural, and historic resources, decommissioning the system, and impacts to agricultural/forestral uses, as well as the standards outlined in the Comprehensive Plan for new uses in the Rural Area.”

STRATEGIC PLAN: Natural Resources Stewardship - Thoughtfully protect and manage Albemarle County’s ecosystems and natural resources in both the rural and development areas to safeguard the quality of life of current and future generations.

DISCUSSION: The County has reviewed three SPs for solar energy systems. One application is currently pending and staff is aware of interest in additional facilities. Due to the increased likelihood of additional applications, staff believes that it is appropriate to develop review processes and project standards that address the unique characteristics of solar energy systems. Staff is proposing to engage our zoning ordinance modernization project consultant, the Berkley Group, to conduct a review and assessment of the County’s current regulatory framework for solar energy systems. This study will also identify best practices and recommendations for policy options and/or potential ordinance amendments related to solar applications.

The following topics are proposed for further study with the consultant team:

- Siting agreement standards,
- Appropriate fees for the review of Utility Grade Solar Facilities including the potential to hire and pay consultants and other experts on behalf of the County,
- Submittal requirements Performance standards,

- Review criteria,
- Review procedures,
- Criteria to allow the Board to determine if the County should adopt a revenue share for solar energy projects and energy storage systems and, if adopted, which provision of Virginia Code § 58.1-2636 is most appropriate to include in the ordinance.

Solar energy systems were not initially included in the CDD work program as part of the zoning ordinance modernization project. If the Board directs staff to proceed with this work, staff will return with a Resolution of Intent that outlines a more detailed scope and identifies the resources needed to proceed.

BUDGET IMPACT: Additional funding would need to be allocated to cover the cost of consultant services for this study if directed to proceed. Staff will obtain estimates to be included in the Resolution of Intent and identify potential funding sources prior to proceeding.

RECOMMENDATION:

Staff is requesting Board direction and feedback on this proposed approach

ATTACHMENTS:

A - Current Review Process