

**Otsego County Planning Agency
239 Referral – Review Summary**

File No. 30-26-03

Proposed Action: 2607 Springfield Center Solar Farm

Pursuant to GML 239-1 review and recommendation by the County Planning Agency includes consideration of “pertinent inter-community and county-wide planning, zoning, site plan, and subdivision considerations” with respect to:

1. Compatibility of land uses

The Town of Springfield received a site plan and special use permit regarding a proposed 25-acre fenced solar facility park (part of 30 acres under applicant's control) to be located on a 169-acre property located at 158 County Highway 29A in Springfield Center, NY 13468. The property is located within the Town of Springfield's Residential-Agricultural District which allows solar farms as a special permitted use, in addition to applicable Solar Law requirements. Quantum DPI Group, Inc. submitted the application materials on behalf of Springfield Center Solar, LLC. Both a site plan review and a special use permit application were submitted to the Planning Board. The proposed 5MW solar facility park, including a point of interconnection to National Grid's 13.2kV distribution line, will consist of single axis tracker pole-mounted panels at a maximum height of 14 feet above grade. The parcel (41.00-2-33.21) is a former sheep farm that is now abandoned and inactive.

2. Traffic generating characteristics and the adequacy of thoroughfares

The parcel on which the proposed solar facility would be located sits adjacent to, and just east of, the hamlet of Springfield Center. During the construction phase, local traffic may be impacted by the summer tourism-driven high volume of cars along nearby State Road 28 which intersects with County Highway 29A just west of the site in question. If approved, construction of the solar farm would be scheduled to begin in April 2027. Access to the parcel is through County Highway 29A.

3. Impact on county or state institutional or other uses

The proposed action is not likely to impact County or State institutional facilities or other uses.

4. Protection of community character as regards predominate land uses, population density, and the relation between residential and nonresidential areas

The applicant has provided an Agricultural Data Statement as is necessary for any proposed project occurring within 500 feet of a parcel located within an agricultural district that is actively engaged in agricultural operations. The property in question sits within Otsego County's Agricultural District One and within 500 feet of four active farm operations. While the area is primarily agricultural, the site would be unique relative to the current community character. However, solar panels (Farm) are listed under the

Residential-Agricultural District as subject to a Special Use Permit (2017 Town Zoning Law, Section 6.5, p30).

As this project involves the siting of a solar farm, it is required by the Town's Solar Law, to include plans for decommissioning the solar farm at the end of its 'useful life' (Local Law No. 2 of 2022 Regulating Solar Energy Systems, Section 2.E.2c(7), p6-7). The applicant projects the conclusion of commissioning by December 2027 with an expected life time of 25 years, thereby ending operations in December 2052. Site decommissioning would be scheduled to be completed during 2053.

5. Drainage

There are three documented wetlands on the overall property parcel containing the proposed project. One freshwater emergent wetland (PEM1A) is located near the center of the property while another wetland (Pf) is located in the northwest corner, while a third wetland, a freshwater forested/shrub wetland (PFO1A) across the eastern end of the parcel. The PFO1A wetland runs between the two areas of solar panel locations. There is an existing dirt road on the property that crosses the stream wetland. The site plan submitted to the Town of Springfield includes a proposed upgraded stream crossing roadway pending approval of a Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP). Drainage may be impacted by the stream crossing roadway portion of the project, however, the SWPPP should address that concern.

6. Community facilities

The proposed action is not likely to impact community facilities.

7. Matters of public convenience, govt efficiency, and to achieving and maintaining of a satisfactory community environment.

The proposed action is not likely to negatively affect matters of public convenience, government efficiency, or to achieving and maintaining a satisfactory community environment at the county-wide or inter-municipal level.

8. Official municipal and county development policies: comprehensive plans, capital programs, regulatory measures. Official plans are those that have been adopted by resolution by the legislative body

The Town of Springfield's Zoning Law (2017) identifies the parcel in question as being within the Agricultural-Residential District.

The Town of Springfield's Solar Law lists solar farms as one of the proposed uses subject to a Special Use Permit (Section 6.5 Permitted and Special Permitted Uses, p. 30). The Town of Springfield explains how the Solar Law is

"intended to promote the effective and efficient use of solar energy resources; set provisions for the placement, design, construction, and operation of such systems to be consistent with the Town of Springfield Comprehensive Plan; to uphold the public health, safety, and welfare; and to ensure that such systems will not have a significant adverse impact on the environment, and on aesthetic qualities and the character of

the Town"(Local No. 2 of 2022 Regulating Solar Energy Systems, Section 2.A.2, p1)."

The Town's Solar Law further requires a minimum parcel size of 150 acres for utility-scale solar energy systems and that such an "energy system shall not exceed 30 acres per every 150 acres owned by the property owner." (Local Law No. 2 of 2022 Regulating Solar Energy Systems, Section 2.E.3b, p8). The proposed project will sit on 30 acres out of a total of 169 acres.

The proposed site plan does not appear to conflict with language reviewed in the current Town of Springfield's Comprehensive Plan and Zoning Law (2009). The Comprehensive Plan expressed opposition to "conversion of productive farmland to support grid-supply facilities" (Local Law No. 2 of 2022 Regulating Solar Energy Systems, Section 2.E.3g, p8). The property in question is not active farmland. The project parcel is mostly located on soil considered by New York State to be either "Prime Farmland" or "Farmland of Statewide Importance", as well as a thin portion along the southern end of the solar farm area designated as "Not Prime Farmland". This information can be viewed in Otsego County's Natural Resource Inventory Tool by visiting https://otsegocountyny.gov/departments/n-r/planning_department/gis.php and scrolling down to click on the "Natural Resources Inventory Tool" link. This soil information is also displayed in the applicant's site plan (Quantum DPI Group, Inc. Proposed Springfield Center Solar Farm, Attachment 3: Site Plan, Sheet 4 of 24).

Other Items Noted: None

Comments: None