

Local Law Filing

New York State Department of State
162 Washington Avenue, Albany, New York 12231

Text of law should be given as amended. Do not include matter being eliminated and do not use italics or underlining to indicate new matter.

Town of Gouverneur

Local Law No. 1 of the year 2022

A local law Providing for Solar Regulations for the Town of Gouverneur

Be it enacted by the Town Board of the
(Name of Legislative Body)

Town of Gouverneur as follows:

Solar Energy Facilities

A: PURPOSE

1. This Article aims to promote the accommodation of solar energy systems and equipment and the provision for adequate sunlight and convenience of access necessary therefore, and to balance the potential impact on neighbors when solar collectors may be installed near their property while preserving the rights of property owners to install solar energy systems without excess regulation. In particular, this legislation is intended to apply to free standing; ground or pole mounted and roof mounted solar energy system installations based upon certain placement. This legislation is not intended to override agricultural exemptions that are currently in place.

B: DEFINITIONS

ALTERNATIVE ENERGY SYSTEMS: Structures, equipment, devices or construction techniques used for the production of heat, light, cooling, electricity or other forms of energy on site and may be attached to or separate from the principal structure.

BUILDING-INTEGRATED PHOTOVOLTAIC (BIPV): The incorporation of photovoltaic (PV) material into a building’s envelope. Technologies include PV shingles or tiles, PV laminates, and PV glass. Examples of placement include vertical facades, semi-transparent skylights, awnings, fixed awnings, and roofs.

COLLECTIVE SOLAR: Installations of Solar Energy Systems that are owned collectively through a homeowner’s association, community or municipal system, “adopt-a-solar-panel” programs, or other similar arrangements.

GLARE: A continuous source of excessive brightness, relative to diffused lighting. This is not a direct reflection of the sun, but rather a reflection of the bright sky around the sun. Glare is significantly less intense than glint.

GLINT: A momentary flash of light that may be produced as a direct reflection of the sun on a solar collection system.

GROUND-MOUNTED SYSTEM: A solar energy system that is anchored to the ground and attached to a pole or similar mounting system, detached from any other structure.

MAJOR SOLAR COLLECTION SYSTEM or COMMERCIAL or SOLAR FARM: An area of land or other area used for a solar collection system principally used to capture solar energy and convert it to electrical energy to transfer to the public electric grid but also may be for on-site use and is intended to be used for any purpose, other than private, or residential, or agricultural use, including community-based systems. Solar farm facilities consist of one or more freestanding GROUND-MOUNTED or ROOF-MOUNTED solar collector devices. Major solar systems are those systems which generate more than 110% of the energy demand for onsite use.

MINOR OR ACCESSORY SOLAR COLLECTION SYSTEM: A solar photovoltaic cell, panel, array, solar hot air or water collector device, which relies upon solar radiation as an energy source for collection, inversion, storage, and distribution of solar energy for electricity generation or transfer of stored heat, secondary to the use of the premises for other lawful purposes, Minor solar collection systems may consist of BUILDING-INTEGRATED PHOTOVOLTAICS, GROUND-MOUNTED or ROOF-MOUNTED solar collector devices. Minor or accessory solar collection systems that do not generate more than 110% of the energy demand of a farm operation in an agricultural district shall be considered as farm equipment under New York State Agriculture and Markets Law §301.

ROOF-MOUNTED SYSTEM: A solar panel system located on the roof of any legally permitted building or structure for the purpose of producing electricity for onsite or offsite consumption.

SOLAR ACCESS: Space that is open to the sun and clear of overhangs or shade. Structures constructed on private property will not infringe on the rights of adjacent properties.

SOLAR ENERGY EQUIPMENT and other solar accessory structures and buildings, assembled with the intent to facilitate the collection of solar energy, including light reflectors, concentrators, and heat exchangers, substations, electrical infrastructure, transmission lines and other appurtenant structures and facilities.

SOLAR ENERGY EQUIPMENT/SYSTEMS: Energy storage devices, material, hardware, or electrical equipment and conduit associated with the production of electrical energy.

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

C: APPLICABILITY

1. The requirements of this section shall apply to all solar energy systems installed or modified after the effective date of this ordinance, excluding general maintenance and repair.
2. Solar energy system installations for which a valid building permit has been issued or, if no building permit is presently required, for which installation has commenced before the effective date of this local law shall not be required to meet the requirements herein.
3. All solar energy systems shall be designed, erected, and installed in accordance with all applicable codes, regulations and industry standards as referenced in the New York State Uniform Fire Prevention and Building Code Act and the Town Code.
4. Nothing contained in this provision shall be construed to prohibit “Collective Solar” installations or the sale of excess power through a “net billing” or “net metering” arrangement in accordance with New York State Public Service Law §66-j or similar New York State or federal law or regulation.
5. All solar energy systems shall be designed, erected, and installed in a manner so as to prevent undue glare from falling on adjoining properties or creating traffic safety issues.
6. All solar collection systems shall require a building permit.

D: SOLAR COLLECTORS AND INSTALLATIONS FOR MINOR SYSTEMS

1. Roof-mounted systems are permitted as accessory uses in all zoning districts, subject to the following requirements:
 - a. The distance between the roof and highest edge or point of the system shall be in accordance with the New York State Uniform Fire Prevention and Building Code.
 - b. Rooftop and building-mounted solar collectors shall not obstruct solar access to adjacent properties.
2. Ground-mounted and freestanding solar collectors are permitted as accessory structures in all zoning districts, subject to the following requirements:
 - a. The location of the solar collectors meets all applicable setback requirements of the zone in which they are located.

- b. The height of the solar collectors and any mounts shall not exceed the height restrictions of the zone when oriented at maximum tilt.
 - c. The solar collectors may not be located closer to a front lot line than the principal building on a property. If the side or rear yard is visible from adjacent properties and roads, a solid fence, berm, or vegetative screening that conforms to local requirements may be installed along shared lot lines to minimize visual impact to neighboring properties.
 - d. Ground-mounted and freestanding solar collectors shall not obstruct solar access to adjacent properties.
3. All solar collector installations must be performed in accordance with applicable electrical and building codes, the manufacturer's installation instructions, and industry standards. Prior to operation the electrical connections must be inspected by the Code Enforcement Officer or by an appropriate electrical inspection person or agency, as determined by the Town. In addition, any connection to the public utility grid must be inspected by the appropriate public utility.
 4. When solar storage batteries are included as part of the solar collector system, they must be placed in a secure container or enclosure meeting the requirements of the New York State Uniform 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 St. Lawrence County and other applicable laws and regulations.
 5. Decommissioning. Minor or Accessory Solar Collection Systems. Decommissioning Requirements for Minor Solar Energy Systems and Solar Energy Systems Designed for Subdivision Use Using Free-Standing or Ground Mounted Solar Collectors. If a Free-Standing or Ground Mounted solar collector(s) ceases to perform its originally intended function for more than twelve (12) consecutive months, the property owner shall remove the collector, mount and associated equipment by no later than ninety (90) days after the end of the twelve-month period. In the event that the property owner fails to remove the aforesaid non-functioning system within the time prescribed herein, the Town may enter upon the land where such system has been installed and remove same. All expenses incurred by the Town in connection with the removal of the non-functioning system shall be assessed against the land on which such free-standing or Ground Mounted solar collector(s) is located and shall be levied and collected in the same manner as provided in Article 15 of the N.Y. Town Law for the levy and collection of a special ad valorem levy.

E: MAJOR SOLAR SYSTEMS

1. **Major Solar Systems** are permitted through the issuance of a special use permit in Commercial and Rural zoning districts and site plan review in accordance with this chapter. In addition, Major Solar Systems must meet the criteria set forth below.

2. A **Major Solar System** may be permitted when authorized by site plan review and special use permit from the Town Planning Board subject to the following terms and conditions:

a. Height and setback restrictions:

- i. The maximum height for freestanding solar panels located on the ground or attached to a framework located on the ground shall not exceed 20 feet in height above the ground.
- ii. The minimum setback from property lines shall be 25 feet, unless adjacent to residential neighbor. The setback for residential neighbors shall be 100 feet.
- iii. Fencing may be provided around all equipment and solar collectors to provide screening from adjacent residential properties and roads. Fencing shall not be barbed wire. When fencing will enclose the perimeter of the site or facility, wildlife friendly fencing that allows the passage of small mammals and reptiles and is designed to minimize wildlife injury and death due to entanglement or strangulation shall be used on sites having a solar facility footprint greater than five (5) acres. Exceptions can be made by the Planning Board for sites that have limited surrounding wildlife habitat.

b. Design standards:

- i. Removal of trees and other existing vegetation should be minimized or offset with planting elsewhere on the property.
- ii. Removal of any prime agricultural soil from the subject parcel is prohibited.
- iii. Proposed major solar collection systems shall minimize the displacement of prime soils that are in active agricultural production. The site plan shall depict the location and extent of prime soils, prime soils if drained, soils of statewide importance, and indicate whether the parcel(s) is/are receiving an agricultural valuation. The site plan shall also depict the location and extent of current agricultural uses on the land (e.g. rotational crops, hay land, un/improved pasture, support lands, and fallow lands) the location of diversions and ditches, and areas where tile drainage has been installed. Prime soils, prime if drained, and soils of statewide importance that are in agricultural production are a valuable and finite resource. The site plan should include a cross section of any subsurface foundations that will be used for the solar array. In the event the array utilizes at-grade ballast footers, the underlayment should include a bed of crushed stone atop

monofilament woven geotextile fabric so that the stone can be readily removed from the site when the facility is decommissioned. A plan for clearing and/or grading the site and Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP) for the site must be included.

- iv. Roadways within the site shall be built along field edges and along elevation contours where practical, constructed at a grade and have a maximum width of 16 feet. Roadways shall not be constructed of impervious materials and shall be designed to minimize the extent of roadways constructed and soil compaction.
 - v. All on-site utility and transmission lines shall, to the extent feasible, be placed underground. Any above ground transmission lines that are used to accommodate the facility shall require utility poles that are tall enough and installed at widths able to accommodate farm machinery and equipment. The installation of guy wires to utility poles is discouraged.
 - vi. Solar collectors and other facilities shall be designed and located in order to minimize reflective glare and/or glint toward any inhabited buildings on adjacent properties and roads.
 - vii. All mechanical equipment, including any structure for batteries or storage cells, shall be enclosed by a minimum six-foot-high fence with a self-locking gate.
 - viii. Major systems or solar farms shall be constructed in a fashion so as to not obstruct solar access to adjacent properties.
 - ix. Any exterior lighting installed within the facility shall be downcast and dark sky compliant with recessed bulbs and full cut off shields.
- c. Signs:
- i. A sign not to exceed twelve square feet shall be displayed on or near the main access point and shall list the facility name, owner and phone number.
 - ii. A clearly visible warning sign concerning voltage must be placed at the base of all pad-mounted transformers and substations not to exceed four (4) square feet.

- d. Safety:
 - i. The owner/operator shall provide evidence that a copy of the site plan application has been submitted to the Fire Chief of the Gouverneur Fire Department. All means of shutting down the photovoltaic solar energy system shall be clearly marked on the site plan and building permit applications.
- 3. If a piece of equipment that meets the definition of oil-filled operational equipment at 40 CFR part 112.2 (e.g. transformers, capacitors and electrical switches) shall comply with the secondary containment procedures of that regulation.
- 4. Decommissioning. Prior to the removal of a Major Solar Collection System, a demolition permit for removal activities shall be obtained from the Town of Gouverneur.
 - a. Decommissioning Bond:
 - i. Prior to issuance of a building permit for a Major Solar Collection System, the owner or operator of the Solar Energy System shall post a surety in an amount and form acceptable to the Town for the purposes of removal in the event the Major Solar Collection System is abandoned. The amount of the surety required under this section shall be one hundred twenty-five percent (125%) of the projected cost of removal of the Solar Energy System and restoration of the property with an escalator of two percent (2%) annually for the life of the Solar Energy System. Acceptable forms shall include, in order of preference: cash; irrevocable letter of credit; or a bond that cannot expire; or a combination thereof. Such surety will be used to guarantee removal of the Major Solar Collection System should the system be abandoned. In such case, the Town Building Inspector/Code Enforcement Officer shall then provide written notice to the owner or operator to remove the Major Solar Collection System, and the owner or operator shall have one (1) year from written notice to remove the Solar Energy System including any associated accessory structures and/or equipment, and restore the site to a condition approved by the Planning Board. If the owner, operator applicant or lessee fails to remove any associated structures or restore the site to the condition approved by the Board, all costs of the Town incurred to enforce or comply with this condition shall be paid using the surety provided by the applicant.
 - b. Decommissioning Plan. An application for a Major Solar Collection System shall include a Decommissioning Plan. Removal of a Major Solar Collection System must be completed in accordance with the Decommissioning Plan. The Decommissioning Plan shall:
 - i. Specify that after the Major Solar Collection System will no longer be used, it shall be removed by the owner and/or operator or any subsequent

owner/operator and shall include a signed statement from the applicant acknowledging such responsibility. The application shall disclose the lease start date, length of the original lease, and number of options and time-frames if the lease is renewed.

- ii. Demonstrate how the removal of all infrastructures (including but not limited to above ground and below ground equipment, structures and foundations) and the remediation of soil and vegetation shall be conducted to return the parcel to its original state prior to construction. In areas where agricultural production will resume, re-vegetation shall include native plants and seed mixes and exclude any invasive species. The reclamation of land when the Major Solar Energy System is decommissioned shall include the removal of rock, construction materials and debris to a depth of four (4) feet, the decompaction of soils to a depth of 18 to 24 inches, regrading and reseeding the site to its original condition prior to the project construction.
- iii. Include photographs or archival color images of the proposed site plan area for Major Solar Collection System. Such information must, in aggregate, adequately portray the entire property for the purpose of future reference when soil and vegetation remediation of the property occurs.
- iv. State that disposal of all solid and hazardous waste shall be in accordance with local, state and federal waste disposal regulations.
- v. Provide an expected timeline for decommissioning within the 365-day period set forth below.
- vi. Provide a cost estimate detailing the projected cost of executing the Decommissioning Plan, subject to third (3rd) party verification at the developer's expense, if required by the Town.
- vii. Within 30 days of changing ownership, notice shall be provided to the Town with the name of the new owner and contact information.

5. Abandonment and Removal:

- a. A Major Solar Collection System shall be deemed to be abandoned after it has ceased operating for a continuous one (1) year period.
- b. Upon cessation of operations of a Major Solar Collection System for a period of one (1) year, the Town may notify the owner and/or operator of the facility to implement the Decommissioning Plan. Within one hundred eighty (180) days of

notice being served, the owner and/or operator can either restore operation equal to 80 percent (%) of approved capacity or implement the Decommissioning Plan.

- c. In the event that construction of the Major Solar Collection System has been started but is not completed and functioning within eighteen (18) months of the issuance of the final Site Plan, the Town may notify the operator and/or the owner to complete construction and installation of the facility within three hundred sixty-five (365) days. If the owner and/or operator fails to perform, the Town may require the owner and/or operator to implement the Decommissioning Plan. The Decommissioning Plan must be completed within one hundred eighty (180) days of notification by the Town to implement the Decommissioning Plan.
- d. Applications for extensions of the time periods set forth in this subsection of no greater than one hundred eighty (180) days shall be reviewed by the Town Board.
- e. Upon recommendation of the Building Inspector/Code Enforcement Officer, the Town Board may waive or defer the requirement that a Major Solar Collection System be removed if it determines that retention of such facility is in the best interest of the Town.
- f. If the owner and/or operator fails to fully implement the Decommissioning Plan within the prescribed time period and restore the site as required, the Town may use the financial surety posted by the owner and/or operator to decommission the site, or it may proceed with decommissioning at its own expense and recover all expenses incurred for such activities from the defaulted owner and/or operator. Any costs incurred by the Town shall be assessed against the property, shall become a lien and tax upon said property, shall be added to and become a part of the taxes to be levied and assessed thereon, and enforced and collected with interested by the same officer and in the same manner as other taxes.

F: SPECIAL USE PERMIT REQUIREMENTS

1. In addition to the special use permit requirements of the Town Code, the following shall be provided to the Town:
 - a. Verification of utility notification. Any foreseeable infrastructure upgrades shall be documented and submitted. Off-grid systems are exempt from this requirement.
 - b. Name, address, and contact information of the applicant, property owner(s), and agent submitting the project. In the event ownership of the facility changes hands, or if the lease is terminated, notification shall be sent to the Town within thirty days of the transfer or termination date. The notice shall include the name and contact

information of the new owner(s). The new owner shall then be bound by the terms of the original agreement.

2. 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, shall be submitted.
3. If the array will be sited on farmland located within an Agricultural District, an Agricultural Data Statement should be completed.
4. Site Plan: Site plan approval is required.
5. Blueprints signed by a Professional Engineer or Registered Architect of the solar installation showing the layout of the system.
6. Property Operations and Maintenance Plan: A property operation and maintenance plan is required, describing continuing photovoltaic maintenance and property upkeep, such as mowing, trimming, etc. Any such plan shall propose that the property maintain a neat and orderly appearance consistent with surrounding properties. The property shall always be maintained in a manner consistent with all properties within the Town of Gouverneur.

G: FEES

1. The fees for a Special Use Permit, Site Plan Review, and Zoning Permit for a Solar Energy System shall be set from time to time by Town Board resolution.
2. The Applicant for either state or local siting approval shall deliver to the Town Board, along with its application if local approval is sought, and concurrent with the filing of an Article 10 Application, if applicable, an amount equal to one percent (1%) of the estimated cost of the project (the "Initial Deposit"). This sum shall be held by the Town in a non-interest-bearing account, and these funds shall be available to the Town to pay consultants and attorneys engaged by the Town to assist in application review if a local permit is sought, and to pay consultants and attorneys engaged by the Town to assist in review of an Article 10 Application should awarded intervenor funds be insufficient to fully participate in the Article 10 Process or should intervenor funds be otherwise exhausted. Following the grant or denial of the state or local application, the Town shall return to the Applicant any excess remaining in escrow. If the escrow account has been depleted prior to grant or denial of the application, the Applicant shall deposit such funds necessary for the Town to pay any outstanding fees to said consultants.

SECTION 2: SEVERABILITY

If any part or provision of this Local Law or the application thereof to any person or circumstance be adjudged invalid by any court of competent jurisdiction, such judgment shall be confined in its

operation to the part or provision or application directly involved in the controversy in which such judgment shall have been rendered and shall not affect or impair the validity of the remainder of this Local Law or the application thereof to other persons or circumstances, and the Town Board of the Town of Gouverneur hereby declares that it would have passed this Local Law or the remainder thereof had such invalid application or invalid provision been apparent.

SECTION 3: REPEAL

All ordinances, local laws, and parts thereof inconsistent with this Local Law are hereby repealed.

SECTION 4: EFFECTIVE DATE

This Local Law shall take effect immediately upon filing in the Office of New York State Secretary of State in accordance with Section 27 of the Municipal Home Rule Law.

(Complete the certification in the paragraph that applies to the filing of this local law and strike out that which is not applicable.)

1. (Final adoption by local legislative body only.)

I hereby certify that the local law annexed hereto, designated as Local Law No. 1 of 2022 of the Town of Gouverneur was duly passed by the Town Board on ~~March 7, 2022~~, in accordance with the applicable provisions of law.

August 9, 2022

2. (Passage by local legislative body with approval, no disapproval or repassage after disapproval by the Elective Chief Executive Officer*.)

I hereby certify that the local law annexed hereto, designated as local law No. ___ of 20__ of the (County)(City)(Town)(Village) of _____ was duly passed by the _____ on _____, 20__, and was (approved)(not disapproved)(repassed after disapproval) by the _____ and _____ (Elective Chief Executive Officer*) was deemed duly adopted on _____, 20__, in accordance with the applicable provisions of law.

3. (Final adoption by referendum.)

I hereby certify that the local law annexed hereto, designated as local law No. ___ of 20__ of the (County)(City)(Town)(Village) of Gouverneur was duly passed by the _____ on _____, 20__, and was (approved)(not disapproved)(repassed after disapproval) by the _____ on _____, 20__. Such local law was submitted to the people by reason of a (mandatory)(permissive) referendum, and received the affirmative vote of a majority of the qualified electors voting thereon at the (general)(special)(annual) election held on _____, 20__, in accordance with the applicable provisions of law.

4. (Subject to permissive referendum and final adoption because no valid petition was filed requesting referendum.)

I hereby certify that the local law annexed hereto, designated as local law No. ___ of 20__ of the (County)(City)(Town)(Village) of Gouverneur was duly passed by the _____ on _____, 20__, and was (approved)(not disapproved)(repassed after disapproval) by the _____ on _____, 20__. Such local law was subject to permissive referendum and no valid petition requesting such referendum was filed as of _____, 20__, in accordance with the applicable provisions of law.

Elective Chief Executive Officer means or includes the chief executive officer of a county elected on a county-wide basis or, if there be none, the chairman of the county legislative body, the mayor of a city or village, or the supervisor of a town where such officer is vested with the power to approve or veto local laws or ordinances.

5. (City local law concerning Charter revision proposed by petition.)

I hereby certify that the local law annexed hereto, designated as local law No. ___ of 20__, of the City of _____ having been submitted to referendum pursuant to the provisions of Section (36)(37) of the Municipal Home Rule Law, and having received the affirmative vote of a majority of the qualified electors of such city voting thereon at the (special)(general) election held on _____, 20__, became operative.

6. (County local law concerning adoption of Charter.)

I hereby certify that the local law annexed hereto, designated as local law No. ___ of 20__, of the County of _____, State of New York, having been submitted to the electors at the General Election of November ____, 20__, pursuant to subdivisions 5 and 7 of Section 33 of the Municipal Home Rule Law, and having received the affirmative vote of a majority of the qualified electors of the cities of said county as a unit and of a majority of the qualified electors of the towns of said county considered as a unit voting at said general election, became operative.

(If any other authorized form of final adoption has been followed, please provide an appropriate certification.)

I further certify that I have compared the preceding local law with the original on file in this office and that the same is a correct transcript therefrom and of the whole of such original local law, and was finally adopted in the manner indicated in paragraph ___1___ above.

(Seal)

Marion Bowhall
Clerk of the County legislative body, City, Town or Village
Clerk or officer designated by local legislative body.
Marion Bowhall, Clerk
Date: March, 2022

(Certification to be executed by County Attorney, Corporation Counsel, Town Attorney, Village Attorney or other authorized Attorney of locality.)

STATE OF NEW YORK)
)ss:
COUNTY OF ST. LAWRENCE)

I, the undersigned, hereby certify that the foregoing local law contains the correct text and that all proper proceedings have been had or taken for the enactment of the local law annexed hereto.

Henry J. Leader
Henry J. Leader, Esq.
Town Attorney
Town of A Gouverneur
Date: March 31, 2022