

WHY DOES LOVELL NEED THE ORDINANCE FOR SOLAR ENERGY SYSTEMS?

Lovell has no zoning provisions specific to solar energy installations.

Lovell has specific zoning for many land uses: cemeteries, junk yards, signage... but not solar, which is a relatively new and potentially impactful land use.

Current Lovell rules list a number of land uses and include a table that specifies the zoning districts in which each listed land use can be conducted. If a proposed land use is not expressly listed in the table, then it is not permitted. Solar energy systems are not listed and, therefore, no solar installations are permitted. But most solar installations are acceptable to Lovell voters. To facilitate the right solar installations while avoiding installations that threaten the character of our town, we need the right tool for the job. This ordinance is the right tool.

After adopting a moratorium on January 25, Lovell is now doing what thousands of communities have done: getting solar right. Communities all over Maine and the nation have done this. After hundreds of hours of research and examining best practices, we have learned from the zoning that others have adopted, and we have meticulously written an ordinance that works for Lovell.

During the moratorium, citizens have followed the legal process for getting the solar ordinance before the voters at a Special Town Meeting, April 2. Lovell voters who attend the Special Town Meeting will have the final say by voting on adopting the ordinance. Because the Town cannot consider any solar applications during the moratorium, and solar otherwise is not a use expressly listed in the table of uses, this ordinance will regulate all future solar proposals, including any that might presently be paused due to the moratorium.

Summary

Streamlined

This solar ordinance makes it easy to permit small-scale and medium scale solar systems, whether at a home, a commercial property, or a Town building. It allows for installations that exceed on-site electricity demand, so that owners can take advantage of net-metering, or selling excess power to the grid. Lovell can consider grid scale applications, following similar standards as required for state permitting, but with Lovell-specific provisions. This avoids costly and time-consuming duplication of process.

Predictable

Solar projects from small scale to grid scale have a clear checklist of standards. The ordinance lets an applicant and the Town know ahead of time exactly what can be built, where it can be built, and how much area it can cover. It even protects the Town for the life of a solar installation, through complete decommissioning and site restoration of larger projects. Appropriately Lovell's quiet and scenic rural character are protected by the ordinance. Sprawling industrial solar projects are not appropriate for Lovell, so like many communities have done (neighboring Denmark's ordinance was helpful to us), Lovell would only allow grid scale projects in the Commercial-Industrial district, and only of a limited size, among many other restrictions. Newly-installed power lines need to be underground, and robust natural buffers would keep solar arrays out of sight.

Timely

Because solar currently is banned in Lovell there is a need act now to permit the types of solar installations the town wants to have. On April 2, Lovell voters can attend the Special Town Meeting and vote YES for the solar ordinance.