

**LOCAL LAW NO. 3 FOR 2022**

**Solar Energy Facilities**

**BE IT ENACTED BY THE TOWN BOARD OF THE TOWN OF BERNE, NEW YORK  
AS FOLLOWS:**

The Code of the Town of Berne shall be amended by deleting Local Law No. 6 of 2019 referred to as “Industrial Scale Solar Energy Facilities Law” in its entirety and replacing it as follows:

**§xxx-1 Title.**

This local law shall be known as the “Solar Energy Facilities” local Law of the Town of Berne, New York.

**§xxx-2 Authority.**

This Solar Energy Facilities local law is adopted under Article IX of the New York State Constitution, New York Municipal Home Rule Law § 10, New York Statute of Local Governments § 10, and New York Town Law §§ 261-263, which authorize adoption of land use regulations that advance and protect the health, safety and welfare of the community, and to make provision for, so far as conditions may permit, the accommodation of solar energy systems.

**§xxx-3 Purpose.**

The purpose of this Solar Energy Facilities local law is to plan for well-sited solar energy generating systems and equipment, and to protect and promote the health, safety, and welfare of the community in accordance with the following objectives:

- A. Allowing Town of Berne residents, landowners, farms, and government to take advantage of solar energy resources in a way that is consistent with the nature and character of the Town in accordance with the Town of Berne Comprehensive Plan.
- B. To further state and local renewable energy goals and combat climate change.
- C. To protect the property values of those properties neighboring and within the view shed of certain solar energy facilities.
- D. To take advantage of a safe, abundant, renewable and non-polluting energy source.

**§xxx-4 Findings.**

The Town Board of the Town of Berne hereby finds and declares that:

- A. Regulation of the siting and installation of solar facilities is necessary for protecting the health, safety, and welfare of neighboring property owners and the general public.
- B. Solar energy is considered a renewable energy resource which may have significant impacts to be considered, including glint and glare, erosion, loss of land suitable for growing crops and trees for forestry, aesthetic impacts, and property values.

#### **§xxx-5 Definitions**

**APPLICANT** – The individual/individuals or entity/entities that apply for any state or local government permit or permission for the installation of an Industrial Scale Solar Energy Facility.

**BUILDING-INTEGRATED SOLAR ENERGY 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.

**dB(A)** – The A-weighted sound pressure level in decibels. A measure of overall sound pressure level designed to reflect the response of the human ear, which does not respond equally to all frequencies. It is used to describe sound in a manner representative of the human ear's response. As used in this document, "dB(A)" means "L(A)eq" unless specified otherwise.

**dB(C)** – The C-weighted sound pressure level in decibels; similar in concept to the A-weighted sound level dB(A) but C-weighting emphasizes sound frequencies between 20 and 200 Hz and does not de-emphasize the frequencies below 200 Hz as A-weighting does. As used in this article, "dB(C)" means "LEQ" unless specified otherwise.

**DECIBEL (dB)** – A dimensionless unit describing the amplitude of sound and denoting the ratio between two quantities that are proportional to power, energy, or intensity. One of these quantities is equal to 20 times the logarithm to the base 10 of the ratio of the measured pressure to the reference pressure, which is 20 micropascals.

**DECOMMISSIONING** – The process of making a solar facility completely inoperable, the removal and proper disposal of all components, and the remediation of the land upon which it was sited.

**FARMLAND OF STATEWIDE IMPORTANCE** – Land, designated as “Farmland of Statewide Importance” in the U.S. Department of Agriculture Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)’s Soil Survey Geographic (SSURGO) Database on Web Soil Survey that is of state-wide importance for the production of food, feed, fiber, forage, and oilseed crops as determined by the appropriate state agency or agencies.

**GLARE** – The effect produced by light reflecting off a solar panel with an intensity sufficient to cause annoyance, discomfort, or loss in visual performance and visibility, sustained over a period of time.

Proposed Local Law #3 of 2022

**GLINT** – A momentary reflection of light from a solar panel with an intensity sufficient to cause annoyance, discomfort, or loss in visual performance and visibility.

**GROUND-MOUNTED SOLAR ENERGY SYSTEM** – Solar energy system that is anchored to the ground via a pole or other mounting system, detached from any other structure that generates electricity for onsite or offsite consumption.

**NATIVE PERENNIAL VEGETATION** – Native wildflowers 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 New York State Department of Environmental Conservation.

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

**PRIME FARMLAND:** Land, designated as “Prime Farmland” in the U.S. Department of Agriculture Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)’s Soil Survey Geographic (SSURGO) Database on Web Soil Survey 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 land uses.

**PROJECT SITE** – The physical area needed for a Solar Energy System that includes any setbacks, buffers, fencing, roads, screening, support facilities, interconnection and Solar Energy equipment.

**ROOF-MOUNTED SOLAR ENERGY SYSTEM:** A Solar Energy System located on the roof of any legally permitted building or structure that produces electricity for onsite or offsite consumption.

**SOLAR ACCESS** – The access of a solar energy system to direct sunlight.

**SOLAR ENERGY EQUIPMENT** – Electrical material, hardware, inverters, conduit, storage devices, or other electrical and photovoltaic equipment associated with the production, storage or transmission of electricity produced from solar energy.

**SOLAR ENERGY SYSTEM** – The components and subsystems required to convert solar energy into electric energy suitable for use. The term includes, but is not limited to, Solar Panels and Solar Energy Equipment. The area of a Solar Energy System includes all the land inside the perimeter of the Solar Energy System, which extends to any interconnection equipment.

A Solar Energy System is classified as a Tier 1, Tier 2, or Tier 3 Solar Energy System as follows;

A. Tier 1 Solar Energy Systems include the following:

1. Roof-Mounted Solar Energy Systems

## 2. Building-Integrated Solar Energy Systems

- B. Tier 2 Solar Energy Systems include Ground-Mounted Solar Energy Systems with a system capacity up to 25 kW AC, and that generate no more than 110 % of the electricity consumed on the site over the previous 12 months.
- C. Tier 3 Solar Energy Systems are systems that are not included in the list for Tier 1 and Tier 2 Solar Energy Systems.

SOLAR PANEL – A photovoltaic device capable of collecting and converting solar energy into electricity. Also known as a solar module.

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

### **§xxx-6 Applicability**

- A. The requirements of this Local Law shall apply to all Tier 3 Solar Energy Systems permitted, installed, or modified in the town of Berne after the effective date of this Local Law, excluding general maintenance and repair.
- B. Tier 3 Solar Energy Systems constructed or installed prior to the effective date of this Local Law shall not be required to meet the requirements of this Local Law.
- C. Modifications to an existing Tier 3 Solar Energy System that increase the Solar Energy System area by more than 5 % of the original area of the Solar Energy System (exclusive of moving any fencing) shall be subject to this Local Law.
- D. All Tier 3 Solar Energy Systems shall 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 Code.

### **§xxx-7 Permitting Requirements for Tier 1 and Tier 2 Solar Energy Systems**

All Tier 1 and Tier 2 Solar Energy Systems shall be permitted and conform to Berne Town Code Chapter 157.

### **§xxx-8 General Requirements**

- A. A Building permit shall be required for installation of all Tier 3 Solar Energy Systems.
- B. Tier 3 Solar Energy Systems are subject to special use permit review and approval by the Zoning Board of Appeals who shall act as lead agency under the State Environmental Quality Review Act (“SEQRA”) and its implementing regulations. The ZBA may refer the application to any other advisory board as deemed necessary.

- C. Tier 3 Solar Energy Systems are subject to Site Plan approval and/ or subdivision approval by the Planning Board in accordance with sec. xxx-13.
- D. In addition to the requirements in this chapter, applications for Tier 3 Solar Energy Systems shall conform with and include the information set forth The Town of Berne Zoning Code § 195-58(B)(1) – (3).
- E. Reimbursement for review of Application for a Certificate of Environmental Compatibility and Public Need Pursuant to Article 10 Public Service Law. The applicant shall reimburse the Town for any fee or expense incurred in hiring subject matter experts and attorneys to review whether a Tier 3 Solar Energy System proposed for siting pursuant to Article 10 of the New York Public Service Law complies with this law's substantive provisions.
- F. Solar access. The approval of a special use permit for a Tier 3 Solar Energy System is not intended to confer on the permittee any additional property rights as against any adjoining or nearby property owners, such as easements of necessity, etc.
- G. Decommissioning plan and cost estimate in accordance with §§ 16, 17 and Appendix A.

#### **§xxx-9 Solar Use in Certain Zoning Districts**

Tier 3 Solar Energy Systems are permitted only in the following zoning districts:

RAF, MDR, I.

#### **§xxx-10 Application Review Process.**

- A. A pre-application meeting with the Building Inspector, Zoning Board Chairperson and Planning Board Chairperson is required for all proposed Tier 3 Solar Energy Systems. Thereafter, six full sized hard copies and one digital of the complete application shall be submitted to the Building Department. Payment of all application fees shall be made at the time of submission. A preliminary determination of application completeness shall be made by the Building Department.
- B. Zoning Board of Appeals shall, within 60 days of receipt, determine if all information required hereunder is included in the application. If the application is deemed incomplete, the applicant shall be provided with a written statement listing missing data. Upon submission of a complete application, the Zoning Board shall proceed with its review and act as lead agency under SEQRA.
- C. The Zoning Board of Appeals shall refer the application to the Planning Board for site plan approval in accordance with the standards set forth in Section 12 herein. The Planning Board shall act as a SEQRA involved agency. No public hearing is required for site plan approval and site plan approval requirements under Town of Berne § 190-

58 shall not apply unless incorporated herein. Within 62 days from the date of referral by the Zoning Board, the Planning Board may approve the site plan conditioned on the Zoning Board granting a special use permit or disapprove the site plan in a written decision setting for the reasons for disapproval. Failure of the Planning Board to render a decision within the prescribed time limits shall constitute approval by the Planning Board.

- D. After conditional approval of the site plan, the Zoning Board of Appeals shall hold at least one public hearing on the application. The public hearing may be combined with public hearings on any environmental impact statement. Applicant must provide proof that all property owners within 1000 feet of the boundary line of the site of the proposed Tier 3 Solar Energy System have given notice of a public hearing via certified mail at the expense of the applicant.
- E. Notice of the project shall also be given to the Albany County Planning Board, as required by General Municipal Law § 239-m.
- F. Following receipt of the recommendation of the Albany County Planning Board (if applicable), the holding of the public hearing(s), and completion of the SEQRA process, the Zoning Board of Appeals may approve, approve with conditions, or deny Tier 3 Solar Energy System special use permit application, in accordance with the standards in this article. Any denial shall be in writing, setting forth competent reasons for such denial with references to relevant sections of this article.

#### **§xxx-11 Fees.**

Tier 3 Solar Energy System special use permits. The review of building and electrical plans for Tier 3 Solar Energy Systems requires specific expertise for those facilities. Accordingly, the permit fees for such facilities shall include:

- A. Administrative / Application fee: An application fee of \$1000.00 plus \$100.00 per disturbed acres for the first 10 acres, then \$250.00 per disturbed acre for acres 11-20, then \$500.00 per disturbed acres 21-30 shall be required as an initial application. Fees may be associated with the periodic renewal or extensions, if any, of an approved application.
- B. Consultant fees: All third party fees, costs and expenses the Town incurs by professional consultant(s) hired to review the plans and inspect the work pursuant to an escrow agreement. The agreement required under this section must be executed and funded before any application is deemed complete. An applicant shall deposit with the Town funds sufficient to reimburse the Town for all reasonable costs of professional services and consultant evaluation and consultation in connection with the review of any Application. An initial escrow deposit of \$2,500.00 (the "Initial Escrow Deposit") shall be filed with the Application. If at any time during the process the escrow account has a balance of less than \$500.00, the Applicant shall immediately, upon notification by the Town, replenish said escrow account so that it has a balance of at least \$2,500.00. Such additional escrow funds shall be deposited with the Town before any further action

or consideration is taken on the Application. In the event that the amount held in escrow by the Town is more than the amount of the actual invoicing at the conclusion of the project, the remaining balance shall be refunded to the Applicant.

- C. Decommissioning deposit or financial security. The amount of the security sufficient to ensure the good faith performance of the terms and conditions of the decommissioning plan as determined by the Town Board in accordance with §§ 16 and 17 herein pursuant to a Decommissioning Escrow Agreement. All approvals shall be conditioned on payment of the required Decommissioning deposit or financial security.

### **§xxx-12 Special Use Permit Requirements**

In addition to all other federal, state and local requirements, Tier 3 Solar Energy Systems are permitted through the issuance of a special use permit by the Zoning Board of Appeals. Applications for Tier 3 Solar Energy Systems shall include the below information and meet the standards in Town of Berne Zoning Code § 190-64 and the following requirements:

- A. Zoning district designation and allowable uses for the parcel(s) of land comprising the project site.
- B. Property Operation and Maintenance Plan. Such plan shall describe
  - 1. Continuing photovoltaic maintenance.
  - 2. Property upkeep, such as mowing, trimming, and snow removal.
  - 3. Frequency of solar panel washing, source of water and additives used.
  - 4. Maintenance of screening and landscaping. This portion shall include a plan to ensure continued growth of trees, shrubs, etc. used for screening purposes and a replacement plan for any that fail to thrive.
- C. Erosion and sediment control and storm water management plans prepared to New York State Department of Environmental Conservation standards, if applicable.
- D. Prior to the issuance of the special use permit by the Zoning Board, but not required as part of the application, engineering documents must be signed and sealed by a New York State (NYS) Licensed Professional Engineer.
- E. Decommissioning plan and cost estimate. An applicant shall provide a detailed decommissioning plan and cost estimate, prepared by a qualified engineer, in accordance with §§ 16, 17 and Appendix A
- F. Sound. The equivalent level (LEQ) generated by any part of a Tier 3 Solar Energy System shall not exceed 25 dB(A) or 43 dB(C) when measured at the nearest lot line. If the A-weighted background sound pressure level, without the Tier 3 Solar Energy

System, is within five dB of 25 dB or exceeds 25 dB, then the A-weighted criterion to be applied to the system shall be the A-weighted background level plus five dB.

- G. Lighting. Any outdoor lighting shall be shielded and downcast to minimize the effect on any person, property, structure, road, vehicle, business, leisure activity, agriculture, parkland, sensitive resource, commercial or transportation activity, night sky, or any other entity or activity identified by the Planning Board. Motion-activated or staff-activated security lighting on or around the project site or accessory structure entrance shall not project off the project site and shall only be activated when the fenced perimeter has been entered.
- H. Parking. Equipment and vehicles not used in direct support, renovations, addition, or repair of the Tier 3 Solar Energy System shall not be stored or parked on the site.
- I. Access. A locked gate at the intersection of the access way and a public road shall be required to prevent unauthorized vehicle entry. Such gate shall be located entirely upon the lot and not on a public right-of-way. Adequate emergency access shall be provided, for relevant law enforcement and first responder agencies.
- J. Fencing. Tier 3 Solar Energy Systems shall be surrounded by fencing sufficient to protect the public and prevent unauthorized access, and high enough to be visible in deep snow cover. Fencing shall have warning signs with the owner's or operator's name and emergency contact information, which shall be placed on any project site access point and on the perimeter fencing as deemed appropriate. All gates shall be self-locking. Fencing shall provide wildlife corridors as appropriate for the project.
- L. Screening and visibility. All Tier 3 Solar Energy Systems shall be required to:
  - 1. Shield views to the greatest extent possible from adjacent properties, nearby roadways, and sensitive viewpoints by careful site selection, using existing topography and retained vegetation, using architectural features, earth berms, landscaping, or other screening methods that will harmonize with the character of the property and surrounding area.
  - 2. Submit a landscape and screening plan which shall specify the locations, elevations, height, plant species, and/or materials that will comprise the structures, landscaping, and/or grading used to screen the system. Existing vegetation may be used to satisfy all or a portion of the required landscaped screening. Applicant shall develop, implement, and maintain native vegetation to the extent practicable pursuant to a vegetation management plan by providing native perennial vegetation and foraging habitat beneficial to game birds, songbirds, and pollinators. To the extent practicable, when establishing perennial vegetation and beneficial foraging habitat, the owners shall use native plant species and seed mixes.
  - 3. Submit the following assessments:



- a. A comprehensive computer modeled glint and glare assessment which shall determine the impact of the proposed project on all roadways and properties which could be affected by glint and/or glare from the project. The study shall be conducted by an independent third party approved by the Town of Berne Zoning Board prior to the study being conducted. The assessment shall consider all times of the day and every day of the year. The assessment shall include projected impacts on all viewers including property owners, including both developed and undeveloped properties, motorists, aviation personnel, hiking trail travelers, farm equipment operators, and domestic livestock.
- b. A comprehensive computer modeled view shed assessment which shall assess the visual impact of the proposed project on all property and roadways within the town from which the project is visible or is potentially visible, with the following requirements:
  - 1) The assessment shall include photographs of the proposed site from all said view shed points.
  - 2) If photographs are taken during months in which deciduous leaves are intact, the study shall include computer modeled mock-ups of viewsheds during the winter months.
  - 3) View shed mock-ups shall include comparative views of project with and without mitigation in place.
  - 4) If plantings of trees and/or shrubs are included in the mitigation plans, view shed mock-ups must reflect their height at the time of planting, as well as at 5- and 10-years expected growth post planting.
- c. The applicant shall pay for all assessments required in this section.

M. Glare.

1. All Solar Panels shall have anti-reflective coating(s).
2. Any glare produced shall not impair or make unsafe the use of adjacent or nearby properties and their structures, vehicles on or off the road, air traffic, or uses by other possible impacted entities as determined by the Planning Board.

N. Additional submissions. After determining that the application is complete and where, due to special conditions peculiar to a site, or the size, nature, or complexity of the proposed use or development of land or buildings, the Zoning Board finds that additional information is necessary for proper review of the special use permit or site plan, the Zoning Board may request additional pertinent information. An application shall be deemed withdrawn if applicant fails to provide such information with 60 days of the request.

**§xxx-13 Site Plan Approval.**

Site plan approval by the Planning Board shall be required for all Tier 3 Solar Energy Systems and applications shall include the below information and meet the following information standards:

- A. Property lines and physical features, including roads, for the project site.
- B. Proposed changes to the landscape of the site, grading, vegetation clearing and planting, exterior lighting, and screening vegetation or structures.
- C. A one- or three-line electrical diagram detailing the Solar Energy System layout, solar collector installation, associated components, and electrical interconnection methods, with all National Electrical Code compliant disconnects and over current devices.
- D. A preliminary equipment specification sheet that documents all proposed solar panels, significant components, mounting systems, and inverters that are to be installed. A final equipment specification sheet shall be submitted prior to the issuance of building permit.
- E. Name, address, and contact information of proposed or potential system installer and the owner and/or operator of the Tier 3 Solar Energy System. Such information of the final system installer shall be submitted prior to the issuance of building permit.
- F. Name, address, phone number, and signature of the project applicant, as well as all the property owners, demonstrating their consent to the application and the use of the property for the Solar Energy System.
- G. Agricultural Resources. For projects located on agricultural lands:
  - 1. Tier 3 Solar Energy Systems located on Prime Farmland shall be constructed in accordance with the construction requirements of the New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets.
- H. Location. Tier 3 Solar Energy Systems shall not be located in the following areas:
  - 1. Areas including, historic sites, airports, conservation easements, trails, parks and wetlands as identified by the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation or the United States Army Corps of Engineers.
  - 2. Slopes greater than fifteen 15%, unless the applicant can demonstrate through engineering studies and to the satisfaction of the Town Engineer that the proposed development will cause no adverse environmental impact that will not be satisfactorily mitigated.

- I. Lot coverage. Lot coverage of the Tier 3 Solar Energy System, as defined below, shall not exceed 30 acres maximum lot coverage of the zoning districts permitted in ~~§xxx-9~~. The following components of a Tier 3 Solar Energy System shall be included in the calculations for lot coverage requirements.
  - 1. The total number of square feet of solar arrays.
  - 2. Foundation systems.
  - 3. All mechanical equipment of the Tier 3 Solar Energy System, including but not limited to switchboard, transformers, and buildings housing mechanical equipment, storage areas and accessory buildings, and the vacant areas between solar arrays.
  - 4. All areas within the required perimeter fence of the SES site covered by paved and unpaved roadways, parking areas, and vehicular paths.
- J. Setbacks.
  - 1. Tier 3 Solar Energy Systems shall comply with the setback requirements in the underlying zoning district or no less 200 feet on all sides from any adjoining parcel not included in the solar energy system, whichever is greater.
  - 2. Tier 3 Solar Energy Systems shall be set back no less than 100 feet from wetlands, streams, ponds, lakes and water wells.
  - 3. Tier 3 SES, including the perimeter fence, shall be set back no less than 400 feet from any adjoining parcel property line in the locations where there is an existing residential structure on the adjoining parcel within 1,000 feet of the proposed SES.
- K. Height. Tier 3 Solar Energy Systems shall not exceed a height of 15 feet from the highest natural grade below each solar panel.
- L. Grading. Tier 3 Solar Energy Systems shall follow the topography of the land upon which it is installed. Topography shall not be altered by any substantial amount by grading or bringing in fill.
- N. Vehicular Paths. Vehicular paths within the site shall be designed to minimize the extent of impervious materials, soil compaction and erosion.
- O. Electrical transmission lines and cables. Electrical transmission lines and cables shall be buried underground, and the erection of new utility poles minimized to the greatest extent possible.
- P. Guy wires. Guy wires shall not be used to support any component of any Tier 3 Solar Energy System.

- Q. Signage. No signage or graphic content shall be displayed on the Tier 3 Solar Energy System except the owner's name, equipment specification information, safety information, and 24-hour emergency contact information, and any other information required by law. Said information shall be depicted within an area no more than 8 square feet and be located on or next to the main gate of the facility.
- R. Emergency Shutoff Information. As required by National Electric Code (NEC), disconnect and other emergency shutoff information shall be clearly displayed on a light reflective surface. A clearly visible warning sign concerning voltage shall be placed at the base of all pad-mounted transformers and substations.
- S. Tree-cutting. Removal of existing trees larger than 6 inches in diameter shall be minimized to the greatest extent possible.
- T. Additional submissions. Where, due to special conditions peculiar to a site, or the size, nature, or complexity of the proposed use or development of land or buildings, the Planning Board finds that additional information is necessary for proper review of the site plan, the Board may request additional pertinent information.

**§xxx-14 Additional Standards.**

All Tier 3 Solar Energy Systems shall:

- A. Conform to all federal and state laws and all applicable rules and regulations promulgated by any federal or state agencies having jurisdiction.
- B. Comply with all other requirements of the Town of Berne Code and applicable guidelines unless expressly superseded by this law.
- C. Be built, operated, and maintained to acceptable industry standards, including the most recent, applicable standards of the Institute of Electric and Electronic Engineers ("IEEE") and the American National Standards Institute ("ANSI").
- D. Emergency services.
  - 1. Project site access shall be maintained, including snow removal at a level acceptable to the local fire department and ambulance provider.
  - 2. Owner/operator shall provide a copy of the project summary, electrical schematic and site plan to the local Fire Chief. All means of shutting down the facility shall be clearly marked.
  - 3. Owner/operator shall cooperate with emergency services in developing an emergency response plan.

4. Owner/operator shall provide and pay for firefighter response and safety training for a potential fire incident at the Tier 3 Solar Energy System

**§xxx-15 Decommissioning.**

- A. Tier 3 Solar Energy Systems that have been abandoned and/or not producing electricity as defined in § 18 shall be removed at the owner's and/or operator's expense.
- B. A Decommissioning Plan and Agreement (see Appendix A) signed by the owner and/or operator of the Tier 3 Solar Energy System shall be submitted by the applicant, addressing the following:
  1. Removal and restoration, including:
    - a. removal of all infrastructure and accessory structures and/or equipment such as panels, collectors, support units (including all underground wiring), mounts, equipment shelters and security barriers from the property;
    - b. removal of all above- and below-ground equipment, structures and foundations;
    - c. proper disposal of all solid and hazardous waste from the site in accordance with local and state solid waste disposal regulations;
    - d. restoration of the surface grade and soil after removal of equipment;
    - e. re-vegetation of restored soil areas; and
    - f. remediation of soil and vegetation shall be conducted to return the property to either its original state prior to construction or in a natural condition with any landscaping and grading approved under the decommissioning plan.
  2. The cost and time estimates for the above removal and restoration prepared by a qualified engineer.

**§xxx-16 Security.**

- A. Decommissioning fund. The permittee, or successors, shall continuously maintain a deposit or security with the Town Clerk in an amount sufficient to pay for the costs and expenses of removal and restoration related to decommissioning the Tier 3 Solar Energy System.
- B. The security may be in the form of cash, letter of credit, bond or another instrument acceptable to the Town's attorney and the Town Board and shall remain in full force and effect until all solar energy system equipment, structures and materials have been properly removed and site restoration is complete.

- C. The security amount shall be determined by the Town Board in consultation with an engineer designated by the Town. The amount of the security shall be sufficient to ensure the good faith performance of the terms and conditions of the permit issued pursuant hereto and to provide for the removal and restorations of the site subsequent to removal, including and all fees, costs and expenses incurred by the Town to administer and enforce the decommissioning process. The amount of the bond or security shall be 120 % of the cost of removal of the Tier 3 Solar Energy System and restoration of the property with an escalator of 3 % annually for the life of the Solar Energy System.
- D. Such amount shall be re-evaluated every five (5) years thereafter and, if necessary, adjusted to reflect prevailing costs and expenses.
- E. If the amount of the security does not fully cover such fees, costs and expenses or if the Town cannot recover adequate proceeds of the security, then the owner and operator of the solar energy system and the property owner shall be jointly and severally, and corporately and personally, liable for the costs not recovered. In addition, the Town may assess such costs against the property, which assessment shall constitute a lien on the property, and which amount may be collected in the same manner as real property taxes.
- F. All decommissioning, removal and remediation fund requirements shall be fully funded before a building permit is issued.
- G. In the event of default upon performance of any conditions in the Decommissioning Agreement or Decommissioning Plan, after proper notice and expiration of any cure periods, the cash deposit, bond, or security shall be forfeited to the Town of Berne, which shall be entitled to maintain an action thereon. The cash deposit, bond, or security shall remain in full force and effect until restoration of the property as set forth in the decommissioning plan is completed.
- H. In the event of default or abandonment of the Tier 3 Solar Energy System, the system shall be decommissioned as set forth in Section xxx-16 and Appendix A herein.

**§xxx-17 Permit Time Frame and Abandonment.**

- A. The Special Use Permit and Site Plan approval for a Tier 3 Solar Energy System shall be valid for a period of 24 months, provided that a building permit is issued for construction. In the event construction is not completed in accordance with the final site plan within 24 months after approval, the applicant may, upon approval of the Planning Board, extend the time to complete construction for an additional 180 days. If the owner and/or operator fails to perform substantial construction after 30 months, the approvals shall expire, the facility shall be considered abandoned, and decommissioning of any construction that has been completed shall commence. Upon completion of construction and start of electrical generation within the allowable time period, the Special Use Permit and Site Plan approval shall become permanent, subject to permit amendments required as a result of project modifications.
- B. Upon cessation of electricity generation of a Tier 3 Solar Energy System on a continuous basis for 6 months, the owner and/or operator will notify the Town and implement the

decommissioning plan. The decommissioning plan must be completed within 360 days of notification.

- C. If the owner and/or operator fails to comply with decommissioning upon any abandonment, the Town Board may, at its discretion, utilize the bond and/or security for the removal of the Tier 3 Solar Energy System and restoration of the site in accordance with the decommissioning plan.

**§xxx-18 Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILOT); Tax Exemption Opt-Out.**

The Town may exercise its right to opt out of the tax exemption provisions of Real Property Tax Law § 487, pursuant to the authority granted by Subdivision 8 of that law. No construction, road work, tree clearing or preparatory work of any kind may commence until the Town Board has either negotiated a PILOT agreement with the owner of the Tier 3 Solar Energy System or exercised its right to opt out of tax exemption provisions.

**§xxx-19. Enforcement; Penalties for Offenses; Remedies for Violations.**

- A. Staff. The Town Board shall appoint such Town staff or outside consultants as it sees fit to enforce this article.
- B. Any person owning, controlling or managing any building, structure or land who shall construct or operate an Tier 3 Solar Energy System in violation of this article or in noncompliance with the terms and conditions of any permit issued pursuant to this article, or any order of the Code Enforcement Officer, and any person who shall assist in so doing, shall be guilty of an offense and subject to a fine of not more than \$350 or to imprisonment for a period of not more than six months. Every such person shall be deemed guilty of a separate offense for each week such violation shall continue. The Town may institute a civil proceeding to collect civil penalties in the amount of \$350 for each violation, and each week said violation continues shall be deemed a separate violation.
- C. In case of any violation or threatened violation of any of the provisions of this article, including the terms and conditions imposed by any permit issued pursuant to this article, in addition to other remedies and penalties herein provided, the Town may institute any appropriate action or proceeding to prevent such unlawful erection, structural alteration, reconstruction, moving and/or use, and to restrain, correct or abate such violation to prevent the illegal act.
- D. Any violation of this Solar Energy Law shall be subject to the same enforcement requirements, including the civil and criminal penalties, provided for in the Laws of the State of New York, or in the zoning or land use regulations of The Town of Berne.

**§xxx-20. Severability.**

Proposed Local Law #3 of 2022

The invalidity or unenforceability of any section, subsection, paragraph, sentence, clause, provision, or phrase of the aforementioned sections, as declared by the valid judgment of any court of competent jurisdiction to be unconstitutional, shall not affect the validity or enforceability of any other section, subsection, paragraph, sentence, clause, provision, or phrase, which shall remain in full force and effect.

**§xxx-21. Supersession**

All local laws, ordinances, or parts of local laws and ordinances of the Town of Berne that are in conflict with the provisions of this Local Law are hereby suspended to the extent necessary to give this Local Law full force and effect.

**§xxx-22. Effective Date**

This Local Law shall take effect immediately upon filing with the Secretary of State.



## **APPENDIX A: Decommissioning Plan Overview**

Decommissioning Plan for \_\_\_\_\_ (“Owner / Operator”) located at:

\_\_\_\_\_.

Prepared and Submitted by: \_\_\_\_\_.

Owner / Operator presents this Decommissioning Agreement for the above named project.

Decommissioning will occur as a result of any of the following conditions:

1. Construction is not completed within 24 months, subject to one 6 month extension approved by the Planning Board.
2. The land lease, if any, ends.
3. The Project, after commencing commercial operation, does not produce power or otherwise ceases to be operational for 6 months.
4. Upon the effective date of notice the applicant or subsequent owner provides to the Town .

The owner of the Facility, as provided for in its lease with the landowner, shall restore the property to its condition as it existed before the Facility was installed, in accordance with the attached Decommissioning Agreement and Decommissioning Plan which includes the following:

1. Introduction and Executive Summary
2. Decommissioning Plan detailing sequential procedure to be followed, including:
  - a. removal of all infrastructure and accessory structures and/or equipment such as panels, collectors, support units (including all underground wiring), mounts, equipment shelters and security barriers from the property;
  - b. removal of all above- and below-ground equipment, structures and foundations;
  - c. proper disposal of all solid and hazardous waste from the site in accordance with local and state solid waste disposal regulations;;
  - d. restoration of the surface grade and soil after removal of equipment including concrete slab and access road removal;
  - e. site restoration, re-vegetation and remediation of soil and vegetation shall be conducted to return the property to either its original state prior to construction or in a natural condition with any landscaping and grading approved under the decommissioning plan.
3. Decommissioning Costs / Expenses and anticipated Timing

Proposed Local Law #3 of 2022

All said removal and decommissioning shall occur within 6 months of the Facility ceasing to produce power for sale.

The owner of the Facility, currently \_\_\_\_\_, is responsible for this decommissioning.

Should the current owner wish to transfer ownership, the prospective owner is required to enter into a new Decommissioning Contract with the Town of Berne prior to transfer of ownership.