

Special Town Meeting Article S15 Large-Scale Ground-Mounted Solar Photovoltaic Installations

Proposed Solar Zoning By-Law Article 5 Section 590

The Wareham Solar By-Law Study Committee has rewritten Section 590 of the Zoning By-Laws to create a path for responsible development of solar projects that balances the rights of landowners while protecting health, safety, and welfare of the public.

- Limits the size of any Large-Scale Ground-Mounted Solar Photovoltaic Installation to **not greater than** 5.0MW DC. At this size, it balances solar with other competing land uses and recognizes the significant contribution that Wareham has already committed to solar development. 19 projects built; 4 not built but permitted; and potentially 6 more in the pipeline! These 29 projects **are not affected** by the revised bylaw **or** any proposed moratorium.
- **Prohibits development** of Large-Scale Ground-Mounted Solar Photovoltaic Installations **in sensitive environmental areas** such as Wetland Resource Areas, Permanently Protected Open Spaces, State Historic Register properties, land where at least 50% of the parcel's area is designated as Priority Habitat, Core Habitat, and/or Critical Natural Landscape as demonstrated in the [BioMap2](#) – thus protecting our sole source aquifer, our globally rare Pine Barrens, Sand Plains and unique local habitat.
- **Limits** grading and earth removal as part of a solar development project (Section 595.7).
- **Requires** Large-Scale Ground-Mounted Solar Photovoltaic Installations to use **non-toxic materials for poles** to mount panels. No chemically treated timber poles!
- **Provides limits** to where Large-Scale Ground-Mounted Solar Photovoltaic Installation can be sited **and encourages development on land that is already disturbed** like Brownfields, eligible landfills, sand and/or gravel pits, and over parking lots as canopies.
- **Provides flexibility** to site Large-Scale Ground-Mounted Solar Photovoltaic Installations on existing suitable agricultural land to help farmers protect their land for future generations.
- **Promotes responsible solar development by providing clear design standards**
- **Protects Town with increased guaranteed funding and a strict decommissioning plan** to cover the costs of removal of solar panels and materials from the site once it is taken offline.
- **Protects the unique nature of Wareham's neighborhoods** by requiring greater setbacks from residential property lines, and requires permanent landscaping with native species in all developments.

Support responsible solar development that protects public safety, the environment, and quality of life in Wareham



Please
Vote YES
Article S15

S15 Solar Zoning By-Law Explanation:

Revisions to Section 590 and other supporting by-law sections of the Wareham Zoning By-Law have been made by the Solar By-Law Study Committee after months of study, careful consideration, and significant community input. The Committee, comprised of seven Wareham citizens of diverse backgrounds, has aimed to balance the rights of landowners to use their land to develop solar energy systems while being committed to protecting the health, safety and welfare of our diverse communities.

The goal was to encourage the responsible development of new solar energy generation facilities in our community by limiting their overall size to no larger than 5.0MW DC which currently requires around 12-14 acres of land. This balances solar with other competing land uses and recognizes the significant contribution that Wareham has already made to solar development with 19 projects built; 4 not built but permitted; potentially 6 more in the pipeline. These 29 projects will not be affected by the revised by-law or any proposed moratorium.

It encourages construction and operation of Large-Scale Ground-Mounted Solar Photovoltaic Installations in previously disturbed areas to minimize adverse ecological impacts. This by-law provides clear standards for the placement, design, construction, monitoring and modification of large-scale ground-mounted solar energy facilities that address public safety, minimizes impacts on environmental justice communities such that no person is deprived of the freedom from excessive or unnecessary glare or noise, scenic, natural and historic resources of the Town and also provides adequate financial assurance for decommissioning. We seek to safeguard the health, safety, and welfare of the public by creating strict building and maintenance guidelines to ensure natural filtration and purification of the Plymouth/Carver sole source aquifer upon which **ALL** of Wareham's residents rely for drinking water and to protect the many small streams of the watersheds and estuaries leading to Buzzards Bay.

Revisions to Section 590 encourages the use of solar energy systems and protects solar access consistent with Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 40A Section 3 and Section 9B (Solar Access) and Green Communities Act M.G.L. Chapter 25A Section 10. This section of the Wareham Zoning By-Law is consistent with Wareham's 2020 Master Plan (page 76) and 2017-2024 Open Space and Recreation plan (pages 88-90) as they recognize the need to protect water and wildlife habitat resources while providing opportunities to increase resiliency from the effects of climate change with green infrastructure and conservation of forests and farmland.

Revisions to Section 590 incorporate the MA state model by-law and Department of Energy Resources SMART program guidance (225 CMR 20.00 September 22, 2021) that strongly discourages siting such projects in areas of important habitat such as our globally rare Pine Barrens. The revisions take into account that significant tree cutting is problematic because of the important water management, cooling, and climate benefits trees provide. According to Tufts.edu, forests pull about one-third of all human-caused carbon dioxide emissions from the atmosphere each year. Researchers have calculated that ending deforestation and allowing mature forests to keep growing could enable forests to take up twice as much carbon.

Revisions to Section 590 discourage developing Large-Scale Ground-Mounted Solar Photovoltaic Installations that result in significant loss of natural resources and encourages rooftop and canopy siting, as well as locating projects in industrial and commercial districts, on farms where appropriate and on vacant, previously disturbed land such as gravel pits and old industrial sites.

**Article S15 is Supported by the Wareham Town Board of Selectmen,
the Finance Committee, and the Planning Board.**