August 11, 2023

Hanover County Planning Department

RE: CUP2021-00005, Springfield Farm Solar, LLC

Please see below responses to the Planning Board Comments on the CUP submittal review on June 16, 2023. We have reviewed all comments and are working to accommodate all requests from the planning board and other departments.

Planning Board Staff Comments

1. On the sketch plan:
   a. Add existing vegetation that will remain. Added.
   b. Add the general location of RPA, wetlands, rivers, streams or other environmentally sensitive features. Added.
   c. Add and differentiate buffers and setback areas based on the following provision identified in the draft policy:
      i. Buffers: Photovoltaic panels, substations, and other equipment associated with the production and distribution of electricity (other than poles and wires) shall maintain the following minimum buffers: We currently show setbacks of 50 feet from all property lines, 125 feet from all adjoining residential property lines and major roadways, and 50 feet from all wetlands. We have met all environmental required buffers by DEQ.
         a. 150 feet from any property with an existing residence.
         b. 100 feet from any other property or road.
         c. 100 feet from wetlands, rivers, streams or other environmentally sensitive features.
         d. No panels, cabinets, or other associated equipment, exclusive of utility poles, wires, cables, and access roads, shall be located closer than twenty-five (25) feet to the buffers required in paragraphs a and b. Fencing will be on the buffer line. This can be accommodated.
         e. No panels, cabinets, or other associated equipment, exclusive of utility poles, wires, cables, and access roads, shall be located closer than ten (10) feet to the buffer required in paragraph c. This can be accommodated.
2. Show buffer details and ensure that in accordance with the following provisions outlined in the draft policy:
   a. Buffer Planting Supplementation The majority of the site boundry is forested and should comply with above, 1, C, i . Where it is not in currently provided , a buffer to meet compliance will be installed.
      - Forested Buffers need no supplementation provided:
        i. The buffer area is covered with at least 75% of natural established vegetation
        ii. The existing plant material is mature and in healthy condition
        iii. The existing plant material consists of a mix of evergreen and deciduous trees
        iv. Any existing trees used to satisfy this requirement must have the entirety of their canopies located within the buffer area
        v. There is an established understory of small trees and shrubs, both evergreen and deciduous, to provide significant buffering at the lower forested area
      - Supplementation for buffer that do not meet all or some of the requirements listed above:
        i. Forested Buffers with no understory buffering as listed in (v) – to be established along the inside or outside buffer line in a staggered pattern and placement, as follows per every 100' of buffer length -
           - 3 small deciduous understory trees
           - 3 small evergreen trees
           - 5 large shrubs

- 10 small to medium shrubs

ii. Forested Buffers with no evergreen tree component – to be established along the inside or outside buffer line in a staggered pattern and placement, as follows per every 100' of buffer length
   - 4 large evergreen trees
   - 6 small evergreen trees

iii. Forested Buffers with no deciduous tree component
   - This does not represent an established mature buffer. Forested areas with only evergreen trees are considered pioneer growth and will need to meet the full buffer supplementation requirements outlined below. The existing evergreen trees can be used to meet this requirement.

iv. Buffer Supplementation for buffers with immature, inadequate or unhealthy existing vegetation – with a staggered pattern and placement, as follows per every 100' of buffer length. In our expert opinion, these are excessive requirements for any developments. In most cases, if the site cannot be seen from adjacent landowners or roads, via existing vegetation, then additional trees and shrubs are not to be added.
   - Plantings to be established in a clustered formation between tangent areas within the buffer
   - Clusters to be of no more than 50' in width
   - 2 Large Deciduous Trees
   - 4 Small Deciduous Trees
   - 6 Large Evergreen Trees
   - 8 Small Evergreen Trees
   - 7 large shrubs
   - 15 Small to medium shrubs
   - Existing healthy vegetation can be used to meet this requirement.

- Maintain Existing Mature Vegetation. The preservation of existing trees and shrubs within required buffers shall be maximized. All trees located within a buffer shall be retained unless removal is necessary to accommodate vehicular access and/or utilities that run generally perpendicular through the buffer.

a. Remove note #5 on Sheet SL2.0, Site layout and equipment locations are preliminary and subject to change.
   Should this Conditional Use Permit be approved, the property will be required to be developed in substantial conformity with the conceptual plan. The actual solar site footprint shall not be changed, but there may be minor changes to the design, subject to equipment availability and technology advancement, and additional permitting requirements imposed by other state and federal agencies. Final site plan to be submitted, prior to construction. Best efforts will be made to maintain conformity with conceptual plans.
   a. Add the zoning of the adjacent properties. Added.
   b. Add the total acreage of the project. Added.
   c. Show existing utility line easements (note attached comments from Public Utilities). Added.
   d. Add a list of pollinator species that will be used for ground cover. A list can be compiled for potential pollinator species.
   e. Add an overlay showing the location of the panels on the soil identification map and identify Prime Agricultural Soils and Soils of Statewide Importance. Please be aware that the draft policy includes the following provision: Added.

3. There were two boundary surveys that have been submitted. One for the parcels in the original submittal and one that only includes the new parcel. Please submit a boundary survey that includes the entirety of the amended project. A single survey map cannot be provided at this time, but can be referenced to the already provided complete survey of properties.

4. The amended application only includes the new parcel. Please submit an application that includes all parcels and on page 3, include the total acreage of all the parcels in the "Total CUP area" section. If the CUP area includes the entire acreage of all the parcels, please add the same acreage to the "Total Area" section. Attached.
5. Please submit a Decommissioning Plan that includes the following as identified in the draft policy: We will work to provide an updated Decommissioning Plan by a Certified Professional Engineer.
    a. Removal of all materials and equipment include cabling and wiring, both above and below ground.
    b. Restoration of the property to its predevelopment condition including:
        i. Soil remediation including de-compaction to ensure agricultural soils are able to support crops or pastureland
        ii. Reforestation of areas where tree clearing has occurred
    c. An estimate of the gross cost for the complete removal of Solar facility and all associated infrastructure, the cost of soil remediation, and the cost of reforestation.
        i. The cost estimate shall not include credits for the resale or salvage of the equipment and materials.
        ii. Cost estimates shall be itemized by decommissioning task
    d. Reimbursement of the County by the Solar provider for an independent review and analysis by a professional engineer of the cost estimate. Original estimate will be provided by a licensed VA Professional Engineer.
    e. Financial surety to Hanover County in an amount sufficient to undertake decommissioning activities should the owner default in its decommissioning responsibilities. A bond will be tied to the decommissioning plan.
    f. The decommissioning cost estimate shall be updated every five (5) years and adjusted for inflation. The value of the surety shall be increased to an amount equal to the inflation-adjusted cost estimate.
    g. Decommissioning shall commence within six (6) months after the facility ceases to produce electricity for the distribution system to which it was connected.

Zoning Review

1. Water and Sanitary Sewer Easements across the CUP boundary will be required for site plan approval to allow upstream areas of the SSA beyond this development to be served with gravity sanitary sewer in the future, including neighboring properties that would naturally drain to stony run. Easement may be within the vegetative buffer and/or setbacks.
2. The easement along Stony Run shall be 50' wide. Easement may be within the 100' vegetative buffer and/or setbacks.
3. Water and Sanitary Sewer Easements along the entire frontages of Cedar Lane and Elmont Road for future waterline extensions will be required for site plan approval. Easement may be within the 125' vegetative buffer and/or setbacks.
4. These easements should be shown conceptually. Final alignments and widths shall be coordinated with site plan approval. We would need a copy of the conceptual plan. But these easements can be accommodated within the vegetative buffer and/or setbacks.

Public Works Review - These requirements will be addressed in pre detailed design or have already been addressed.

1. Additional development subject to runoff reduction and channel protection.
2. Evaluation of permissible velocity in natural channels will be required.
3. Identify wetlands and RPA, provide WQIA certification of these features. No construction is allowed in these areas without appropriate approvals. Obtain wetlands approval as needed for any impacts.
4. Floodplain on site will have to be computed/established
5. Topo may require due consideration of E&S controls.
6. Site must meet DEQ guidance for solar development.

Fire Marshall Review

1. Access to the sites 12-foot wide roads throughout. Noted on plans.
2. Knox locks on access points. Noted on plans.
3. Location naming/addressing for sites. Will be complete prior to construction.
4. Emergency shutoff for the sites and training. Will be provided.

Health Department Review

1. If onsite sewage disposal is needed owner should contact an AOSE working with a PE to evaluate and design system prior to applying for Building Permit. If site has well that will need to be abandonment permit. Include AOSE proposal for well abandonment with application for abandonment. Otherwise approve application. Onsite sewage will not be needed.

Historical Commission Review

1. The commission recommends that the applicant provide a vegetative screen wherever a solar farm is proposed adjacent to residential properties and within view of any road frontages to shield solar panels from view from the road and from adjacent residential parcels. Addressed above.

We look forward to working with the county and becoming another neighbor of the community.

Please let me know if you have any questions.

Thank you,

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