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State of Louisiana

Parish of Vernon



REGULAR MEETING: --- --, 2026

ORDINANCE No. -- of 2026

ORDINANCE

AN ORDINANCE TO AMEND ORDINANCE NO. 9 of 2025

AN ORDINANCE PROVIDING REGULATIONS FOR THE SITE DEVELOPMENT OF LAND IN THE UNINCORPORATED AREA OF VERNON PARISH FOR THE PURPOSE OF CONSTRUCTING AND OPERATING "SOLAR FARMS;" AND, FURTHER PROVIDING WITH RESPECT THERETO.

- WHEREAS,** it is apparent that the unincorporated portion of Vernon Parish includes areas that are suitable for the development of large "solar farms" using arrays of devices to collect energy from the sun for the purpose of generating electric power;
- WHEREAS,** such solar farms present a unique need for Site Development regulations given the acreage involved in such developments, the characteristics of the structures constructed and placed on these properties, the potential impact on neighboring properties, the potential impact on vehicle traffic, and other factors;
- WHEREAS,** the present site development requirements applicable in the unincorporated area of Vernon Parish does not fully address the unique aspects of the development of sites for the establishment of solar farms; and,
- WHEREAS,** the Vernon Parish Police Jury finds that additional regulations of the development of sites for solar farms is in the interest of the citizens of Vernon Parish;

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT ORDAINED that the Compiled Ordinances of Vernon Parish be, and are hereby, supplemented and amended to add "Site Development Regulations for Solar Farms," providing as follows:

Site Development Regulations for Solar Farms

Purpose.

The purpose of this Ordinance is to provide additional Site Development regulations necessary to address unique circumstances presented by the development of sites for the construction, establishment and operation of "Solar Farms",

Definitions.

For the purposes of this Ordinance the following terms shall mean:

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Solar energy means radiant energy received from the sun that can be collected in the form of heat or light by a solar collector.

Solar energy system means a device or structural design feature intended to provide for collection, storage, and distribution of solar energy for heating or cooling, electricity generation, or water heating.

Solar farm means the use of land where a series of solar collectors and related equipment and accessories are placed in an area on a parcel of land for the purpose of generating photovoltaic power which has a generation capacity of at least one (1) megawatt (MW) direct current (dc) or more when operating at maximum efficiency. Solar farm shall not be interpreted to mean one or more solar collectors intended to provide electrical power generation for a single residential dwelling or commercial property. Accessories may include maintenance buildings, electric transmission lines, substations, energy storage equipment, and related accessory uses and structures.

Opaque visual barrier means a barrier that is created by dense tree cover with an uninterrupted line of trees and shrubs, earthen berms or solid fencing or combination of any of these elements designed to comply block the view between two (2) areas.

Permits and fees.

- a) Before commencing the construction, placement, establishment, expansion, or substantive alteration of a solar farm the owner of an existing solar farm or the developer of a new solar farm shall require a Site Development Permit from the Vernon Parish Police Jury in accordance with the requirements of this Ordinance.
- b) Applications for site development permits for solar farms shall include a site plan showing all property to be included in the project, all access roads, drainage study, environmental study, and a traffic plan. The applicant shall conduct at least one community meeting to provide adjacent landowners and the public an opportunity to ask questions and discuss the project. The community meeting shall be conducted prior to permit approval. Notice of the public meeting shall be published at least twice in the official journal, and the meeting shall be held at a location in the parish suitable for public meetings.
- c) The applicant shall include with the permit application the plan for the solar farm that meets the requirements provided for in this Ordinance.
- d) Upon submission of a permit application for a Solar Farm the applicant shall pay a fee to the parish in the sum of one thousand dollars (\$1,000.00) plus five dollars (\$5.00) per acre. The applicable permit fee shall be determined by consideration of the entire project, inclusive of buffer zones and access roads.
- e) An annual monitoring and maintenance fee beginning the year after issuance of the permit and every year thereafter not to exceed two thousand five hundred dollars (\$2,500.00).
- f) If, at any time, the parish requires the assistance of an expert(s) to assist in reviewing and verifying siting requirements, the applicant will be responsible to pay all reasonable expert's fees.
- g) Review and issuance of the application for a permit hereunder shall be by the Parish Administrator and the Parish Road Manager, with the concurrence of the Vernon Parish Police Jury. If the application is denied at any step of the review process, the official issuing such denial shall provide a written statement as to the reasons for the denial to the applicant and the applicant shall be afforded thirty (30) days to submit additional information or an amended plan to remediate the defects that were the basis for the denial. If the application is finally denied, the applicant shall have the option to appeal the

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denial to the Police Jury, and the Police Jury may, by majority vote, direct the Administrator to grant the permit.

- h) A permit issued under this Ordinance may be transferred or assigned, with the assignee being obligated to all requirements of the permit and this chapter; however, written notice of such transfer or assignment shall be made to the parish and the identity of the new permittee shall be noted in the parish records.
- i) The issuance of a permit under this Ordinance shall serve as the agreement and acknowledgment by the permittee, and its successors and assigns, as well as the property owners, that the Vernon Parish Police Jury shall have stood to enforce any and all provisions and obligations of the permit.
- j) A permit shall expire twenty-four (24) months from the date of issuance, unless either work has commenced on the solar farm that is of a nature and character that reflects a good faith intention to continue the work until completion or, upon application of the developer, the Parish Administrator grants an extension. After the expiration of a permit for failure to commence work within said twenty-four (24) months, the applicant may reapply.

Single or multiple tracts.

- a) A solar farm may be operated on a single contiguous tract or multiple non-contiguous tracts, either with ownership by applicant, under one or more leases in which applicant is lessee, or any combination thereof.
- b) Any permit issued for a solar farm which relies upon one or more lease agreements shall become null and void upon the termination of any such lease agreement with respect to the land subject to the terminated lease. This provision shall not apply when the lease agreement is terminated upon the permittee/lessee taking ownership of the property previously subject to the lease. This provision shall not apply when the permittee/lessee can demonstrate to the Parish engineer's reasonable satisfaction that the Solar Farm plans and specifications can be modified to accommodate the permitted Solar Farm without the use of the property that is the subject of the terminated lease.

Traffic plan.

- a) The plan for a proposed solar farm shall include a traffic plan.
- b) The traffic plan must be approved by the Parish Road Manager prior to the issuance of the permit.
- c) Whenever possible, contractors should construct and use a temporary access road during the construction of the project to mitigate the impact on nearby residences and damage to the local roads.
- d) The plan shall account for the movement of vehicles that will use public roads during the construction, maintenance and decommissioning of the solar farm. Temprary Traffic Control signs are required under any plan to be placed in advance of the points of ingress and egress from temporary access roads / entries / exits onto a Parish Road and from a Parish Road on to a State Highway within one (1) mile of the permitted site. Temporary Traffic Control signs warning of construction area and slow moving traffic ahead are required to be thirty-six (36) inch by thirty-six (36) inch signs along Parish Roads and posted five hundred (500) feet in advance of the point of ingress and egress. Temporary Traffic Control signs are required along State Highways and are required to be forty-eight (48) inch by forty-eight (48) inch and placed one-thousand (1,000) feet and five-hundred (500) feet in advance of the point of ingress or egress, which includes from a permitted Parish Road use to a State

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Highway. All Temporary Traffic Control signs are required to be orange in color.

- e) The plan shall provide for the remediation of any damages caused by the solar farm project occasioned to public roads during the construction, maintenance and decommissioning of the solar farm. Applicant is 100% responsible for the cost and repair of any damages occasioned to public roads attributed to the project during the construction, maintenance and decommissioning of the solar farm

Drainage plan.

- a) The plan for a proposed solar farm shall include a drainage plan.
- b) The drainage plan shall include hydrologic and hydraulic (H&H) analysis to establish that the solar farm will not have any adverse impact on the parish drainage system or adjacent property owners; alternatively, the drainage plan shall establish a plan for remediating any adverse impact on the parish drainage system or adjacent property owners that may result from the construction of and the operation of the solar farm.

Buffer zones and vicinage.

- a) The plan for a proposed solar farm shall include the provision of a buffer zone around the perimeter of the solar farm.
- b) The buffer zone shall consist of a setback of at least ~~one hundred fifty (150)~~ 300 feet from any public road as measured from the edge of the currently maintained road right of way. ~~fifty (50) feet from the front line of any adjacent property (as configured at the time of the application); and, twenty-five (25) feet from the rear or side line of an adjacent property.~~

and

The buffer zone shall consist of a setback of at least five hundred (500) feet from the property line of any private property (this includes, but is not limited to, residences, privately owned agricultural land, or any other occupied structure.

In the event that a five hundred (500) foot buffer zone impacts an already existing business, the facility owner MUST consult with the property owner and come to an agreement that will satisfy the property owner and facility operator.

and

Private property owners may, at their discretion, enter into a separate written agreement with the facility operator to allow for a lesser setback adjacent to their property. This agreement shall be submitted to the Vernon Parish Police Jury as part of the permit application process.

- c) The buffer zone shall be maintained in such a manner so as to not present a nuisance as provided for otherwise in the Code of Ordinances. Maintenance thereof shall be subject to the enforcement provisions of the Code of Ordinances in regard to nuisances and abatement thereof.
- d) No structures or equipment shall be placed in the buffer zone except for fences or walls constructed of new materials and underground electrical or communication lines. Trees or other vegetation may be placed in the buffer zone. Access roads and overhead electrical or communication lines may be placed in a buffer zone upon approval of the Vernon Parish Police Jury.

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- e) Structures or equipment outside the buffer zones shall be designed, constructed, or situated so as to prevent any glare, noise (no more than 10 dBA above ambient noise levels as measured from the property line), heat, odors or the like emitted from or by such structure or equipment having an unreasonable impact on neighboring properties, including public roads.
- f) Screening at least six feet (6') in height consisting of vegetation, earthen berms, or solid fencing (or a combination of these elements) is required in the buffer zone adjacent to the ~~curtilage of any existing residence~~ property line of adjacent property owners. If a vegetative barrier is the sole barrier, it shall be comprised of native vegetation, shall ensure an opaque barrier year-round, and shall be required for permitting. Existing vegetation on site may be retained undisturbed in satisfaction of the vegetative barrier requirement if it otherwise meets requirements of this section. A sole vegetative barrier shall be a thirty-five (35) foot deep vegetative composed of new plant material or a fifty (50) foot deep vegetative barrier composed of natural plant material.
- g) An opaque barrier is required in the buffer zone adjacent to the property line of adjacent property owners.

Secured access and lighting.

- a) The plan for a proposed solar farm shall include a plan for sufficient access for first responders during both construction and operation.
- b) The plan for a proposed solar farm shall include the minimum lighting necessary for the safe operation of the solar farm and shall be designed to limit, to the extent practicable, the impact of artificial lighting on adjacent residences, buildings, roadways or properties.
- c) Perimeter fencing must comply with National Electric Safety Code or other applicable safety code standards. Where practicable, applicants should strongly consider fencing options which are aesthetically fitting to surrounding area (i.e. "high fence" in rural locations).

Decommissioning plan.

- a) The plan for a proposed solar farm shall include a decommissioning plan for the restoration of the area of the solar farm upon the cessation of operations of the solar farm.
- b) Cessation of operations and maintenance, without prior written notice to the parish, for a period exceeding one hundred and eighty (180) consecutive days shall trigger the decommissioning plan and termination of the permit. If permittee provides written notice to the parish, within the 180-day period providing an anticipated timeline for resumption of operations, the decommissioning requirement shall not be triggered, and the parish's approval of such extension shall not be unreasonably withheld.
- c) The decommissioning plan shall provide for the removal of the solar panels, ancillary structures, and other infrastructure utilized in the operation of the solar farm and shall specify the timeline for such actions. Failure to adhere to the plan, including meeting the included timeline, may subject the permittee to liquidated damages as follows: In the event an inspection notes a failure to adhere to the plan, the parish shall provide written notice to the permittee of the deficiency, which notice shall be deemed provided upon delivery by mail or electronic means. The permittee shall have sixty (60) days from the date of delivery of the notice to remediate the deficiency. If the permittee fails to remediate the deficiency within said sixty-day (60-day) period, the permittee agrees to pay a penalty to the parish of five hundred dollars (\$500.00) for each subsequent day, or part thereof, that the deficiency is not remediated, with each day considered a separate violation.

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- d) The decommissioning plan shall provide for remediation of any environmental hazards resulting from natural disasters.
- e) The decommissioning plan shall provide for the remediation of any environmental hazards caused by the former solar farm, as determined by the EPA, DEQ, or the Vernon Parish Police Jury.
- f) A showing that any lease forming a portion of the application for the original permit includes (or incorporates by reference) a sufficient decommissioning plan and the funding thereof as a necessary term or condition.
- g) A decommission bond in an amount sufficient to ensure proper site closure. Any bond shall be executed by the permittee and a corporate surety licensed to do business in the state. The bond or other instrument shall be payable to the Vernon Parish Police Jury. The decommissioning bond shall be re-evaluated every ~~five (5)~~ three (3) years.

Maintenance plan.

- a) A maintenance plan shall be submitted as part of the permit application process.
The plan shall include a schedule for the regular maintenance in place of the solar farm and buffer zone including but not limited to grass cutting, shrubbery and tree maintenance, chemical or herbicides/pesticides application (and justification for use), and general upkeep of the premises. The maintenance plan shall include provisions providing for the removal of any trees or shrubs planted as a vegetative screen that die or become significantly degraded and the replacement of such trees or shrubs with trees/shrubs of a like or comparable kind. All landscaping must be maintained and warrantied for the life of the facility. Any plant material deemed unhealthy must be replaced immediately. Any chemical that is not approved for agricultural application shall not be sprayed for maintenance of a solar generation facility site.
- b) Adherence to the plan is subject to periodic and annual inspections by the parish, and the parish may require adherence to the plan in regard to maintenance.
- c) In the event an inspection notes a failure to adhere to the plan, the parish shall provide written notice to the permittee of the deficiency, which notice shall be deemed provided upon delivery by mail or electronic means. The permittee shall have thirty (30) days from the date of delivery of the notice to remediate the deficiency. If the permittee fails to remediate the deficiency within said thirty-day (30-day) period, the permittee agrees to pay a penalty to the parish of five hundred dollars (\$500.00) for each subsequent day, or part thereof, that the deficiency is not remediated, with each day considered a separate violation.
- d) The parish may also enforce the plan through the existing parish ordinances governing the abatement of nuisances.

Regulations.

Facility owner must comply with all Federal and State guidelines related to environmental regulations, water runoff, water drainage, etc.

If, at any time during either construction or operation of the solar farm, there is an adverse effect on any adjoining property owner, facility owner MUST work with the property owner to mitigate and correct the issue.

BE IT FURTHER ORDAINED that the provisions of this Ordinance shall become effective upon adoption by the Vernon Parish Police Jury.

BE IT FURTHER ORDAINED that if any section, paragraph, sentence clause and/or phrase of this Ordinance or the application thereof is declared unconstitutional, unenforceable or invalid by the final Judgment of any Court

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of competent jurisdiction such unconstitutionality, unenforceability, or invalidity shall not affect the remaining sections, paragraphs, sentences, clauses and/or phrases of this Ordinance, since the same would have been enacted by the Vernon Parish Police Jury without the incorporation into this Ordinance of any such unconstitutional, unenforceable or invalid section, paragraph, sentence, clause or phrase. To that end, the provisions of this Ordinance are hereby declared severable.

On motion by Mr. ---, seconded by Mr. ---, the roll was called and recorded as follows:

YEAS:

NAYS:

ABSENT:

ABSTAIN:

The motion carried and the ordinance was adopted on this the -- day of ---, 2026, at which meeting a quorum was present.

Rhonda M. Plummer
Administrator & Treasurer

James B. Tuck
President

* * * * *

STATE OF LOUISIANA

PARISH OF VERNON

I, Belinda S. Diehl, Secretary of the Police Jury of Vernon Parish, Louisiana do hereby certify that the foregoing is a true and correct copy of an ordinance adopted by the Vernon Parish Police Jury in regular session on **Monday, ---, --, 2026** at which meeting a quorum was present.

GIVEN UNDER MY OFFICIAL signature and seal of office on this **the --- day of ---, 2026**, in Leesville, Louisiana.

Belinda S. Diehl
Secretary