

2026-0082

**INTRODUCED BY: WALTER PILIÈ, COUNCILMAN, DISTRICT III
MICHELLE O'DANIELS, COUNCILWOMAN, DISTRICT V**

ORDINANCE NO. 26-3-6

An ordinance to amend Ordinance 81-10-6, the St. Charles Parish Zoning Ordinance of 1981, as amended, Appendix A. Section VII. Supplemental use and performance regulations.: *Solar Energy System, Large (LSES)* to add development standards.

WHEREAS, Section VII. Supplemental use and performance regulations establishes the development standards for Large Solar Energy Systems (LSES); and,

WHEREAS, recent updates to Louisiana State Law related to Solar Energy production has implemented increased minimum development standards; and,

WHEREAS, St. Charles Parish official opted out of the State requirement in order to maintain local control, but desires to increase minimum standards for LSES in accordance with its current ordinance.

THE ST. CHARLES PARISH COUNCIL HEREBY ORDAINS:

SECTION I. The St. Charles Parish Zoning Ordinance of 1981, Appendix A. Section VII. Supplemental use and performance regulations.: *Solar Energy System, Large (LSES)* is amended with new text underlined and deleted text in ~~strikethrough~~:

Solar Energy System, Large (LSES)

Large Solar Energy Systems (LSES) shall be subject to the additional regulations and requirements set forth below:

- a. The minimum lot size for an LSES installation is 10 acres.
- ~~b~~-a. Solar PV panels shall be setback a minimum of three-hundred thirty feet (300' 30') from all existing property lines.
- ~~c~~-b. The maximum height of a solar PV panel shall be thirty feet (30') oriented at maximum tilt. The maximum height of a switching station shall not exceed the minimum height needed to tie into electrical transmission lines. The height of all other buildings and accessory structures shall comply with the maximum building height requirements of the applicable zoning district in which the LSES is located. The height of lightning rods shall be limited to the height necessary to protect the switching station and shall not be lighted.
- ~~d~~-e. Lighting shall be limited to the minimum necessary, directed downward, and set with motion-sensors. No lighting shall extend beyond the perimeter of the LSES.
- ~~e~~-d. No LSES shall produce glare that would constitute a nuisance to occupants of neighboring properties or to persons traveling public roads.
- ~~f~~ e. Commercially reasonable screening shall be installed at the applicant's expense to provide adequate screening between the LSES and adjacent non-participating primary residential dwellings.
- g. LSES must be constructed with evergreen vegetative screening. Landscape buffers for these developments must meet the following requirements:
 - i. Existing forested vegetative buffers. Existing undisturbed vegetative buffers with six trees over 50 feet deep within every 100 feet of project boundary line shall not be required to install new plant material if the existing vegetation creates a continuous opaque visual barrier within 25 feet of the project boundary line. For existing vegetative buffer locations where gaps are within the visual barrier, shrubs must be added along the edge of the property line as required to create an opaque barrier. New shrubs shall reach a minimum of six feet within a three-year period. Vegetative planting must only use native trees and shrubs as listed in Section VIII., I. Landscaping requirements Tables 8-4 and 8-5.

- ii. Landscape buffers zones without any trees or shrubs must install the following planting material:
 - 1. For every 50 feet of project buffer zone a new 25-foot-deep landscape buffer must be installed and comprised of six Class A trees, three Class B trees (as per Section VIII., I. Landscaping requirements Tables 8-4 and 8-5) and 24 shrubs.
 - 2. Shrubs must be installed in a continuous line as to create a continuous six-foot opaque visual barrier within three years.
- iii. Landscape buffer materials must meet the following requirements:
 - 1. A minimum of 50 percent of all plants must be evergreen.
 - 2. No more than 30 percent of any one species will be allowed.
 - 3. Evergreen trees will be a minimum of six feet in height at installation.
 - 4. Deciduous trees must have a minimum of 2½ inches caliper at installation.
 - 5. All shrubs must be a minimum of 18 inches in height at installation.
 - 6. A minimum of 50 percent of the evergreen shrubs must reach a minimum of five feet within three years of installation.
 - 7. All landscaping must be maintained and warrantied for one year. Any plant material during the one-year period deemed to be unhealthy by the parish must be replaced immediately.
 - 8. Stamped landscape plans by a licensed landscape architect or landscape horticulturalist must be required for permitting. At the completion of the landscape buffer installation a certification of completion signed by the licensed landscape architect or landscape horticulturalist designer of record must be submitted to the parish.
 - 9. Vegetative planting must only use native trees and shrubs as listed in Section VIII., I. Landscaping requirements Tables 8-4 and 8-5.
 - 10. Failure to continuously maintain the foregoing visual buffers will constitute a violation of the Zoning Ordinance.
- h-f. Fencing at a minimum height of six feet (6') shall be installed around the perimeter of the LSES and any other measures necessary to ensure the security and safe operation of the LSES shall be taken. Deer fencing may be utilized where feasible.
- i-g. The LSES shall comply with all applicable stormwater management and groundwater laws and regulations, and any federal, state, and local permits shall be obtained.
- j-h. Any noise produced by the LSES shall not exceed fifty-five (55) dBA, as measured at any adjacent property line.
- k-i. The LSES layout and operation shall be designed to minimize negative impacts on wildlife, including overflight migrating birds and riparian zones, and ongoing monitoring of any identified negative impacts will be provided.
- l-j. Livestock grazing, agriculture, and other compatible uses shall be permitted within a fenced LSES, subject to the requirements of the underlying zoning district.
- m-k. No advertising or signage, other than that required by law and approved address/identification signage as allowed under Section XXI, shall be permitted on the LSES.
- n-l. A project summary shall be provided to the Zoning and Regulatory Administrator containing the following information:

- i. Number, location, and spacing of proposed solar PV panels/arrays
 - ii. Planned location of O&M building, switchyard, and transformers
 - iii. Planned location of underground or overhead electrical lines and related infrastructure
 - iv. Project development timeline
 - v. Operation and maintenance plan
 - vi. Vegetation management and landscaping plan, including grading
 - vii. Decommissioning Plan, subject to the requirements of below
 - viii. Name and contact information of the LSES operator
 - ix. Proof of access and use rights to the LSES property, including evidence of landowner authorization and a list of all landowners
 - x. Specifications for all planned equipment to be installed at the LSES
 - xi. Site access and emergency response plans
- o-m. The LSES shall comply with all federal, state, and local laws, codes, and regulations, including but not limited to the National Electric Code, the National Electric Safety Code, local building codes, and any generally applicable permitting requirements.
- p-n. The LSES shall be maintained in accordance with this Zoning Ordinance and all applicable Parish requirements. Maintenance shall include but not be limited to painting, structural repairs, vegetation management, and integrity of security measures including fencing. No damaged, broken, or non-working parts or equipment shall be stored on site.
- q-o. A Decommissioning Plan consisting of the following information shall be provided to the Zoning and Regulatory Administrator:
- i. The anticipated operating lifetime of the LSES
 - ii. Description of the activities necessary to decommission the LSES upon closure and cessation of operations
 - iii. Description of site restoration activities to be undertaken following decommissioning to restore the LSES site to its original use, condition, and appearance
 - iv. Cost estimate of site decommissioning and restoration in current dollars
 - v. Description of the necessary mechanism for posting a satisfactory bond to cover the anticipated decommissioning costs.
 - vi. Timeline for completion of all decommissioning and site restoration activities
- r-p. The LSES operator shall post a bond, in a form and amount acceptable to the Zoning and Regulatory Administrator, equal to 125% of the decommissioning and site restoration costs specified in the Decommissioning Plan. The amount of the bond shall be recalculated every five (5) years and provided, with an updated bond (if necessary), to the Zoning and Regulatory Administrator.
- s-q. As-built drawings shall be provided to the Zoning and Regulatory Administrator upon completion of construction of all development on the LSES site. (Ord. No. 23-3-1, § VI, 3-13-23)
- t. All applications submitted pursuant to this section for approval of any LSES permit must include a detailed map analysis highlighting all airport operations and/or designated flight paths within five nautical miles of the outermost proposed boundaries of any proposed solar power plant, and, for all such airport operations or designated flight paths located therein, must additionally include:

- i. A full report of potential aviation glare hazards (AGH) arising from the proposed solar power plant on all such airport operations and/or designated flight paths using the most recent version of the Department of Energy's Sandia National Laboratories recently developed glare hazard assessment tool (or any other assessment tool required or otherwise recommended by the FAA) in accordance with its user manual, and applying the same evaluation standards required and otherwise recommended by the FAA for evaluating AGH of off-airport solar projects, it being the intent of this section to require all applicants to utilize the most recent and thorough evaluation techniques of measuring AGH then available and required or otherwise recommended by the FAA, as modified from time to time.
- ii. A Letter of "No Objection" responding to the potential for aviation glare hazards from any airport or airport authority within the five nautical mile radius as previously mentioned in this section.
- iii. Changes in proposed solar power plant design standards prior to any permit approved under this section will require proof of re-delivery of an updated notice and full report in accordance with the foregoing provisions.

The foregoing ordinance having been submitted to a vote, the vote thereon was as follows:

YEAS: MOBLEY, FONSECA, WILSON, SKIBA, PILIE, COMARDELLE,
 O'DANIELS, FISHER, DEBRULER
 NAYS: NONE
 ABSENT: NONE

And the ordinance was declared adopted this 16th day of March, 2026, to become effective five (5) days after publication in the Official Journal.

CHAIRMAN: *Walter L. L...*
 SECRETARY: *Michelle Spadaro*
 DLVD/PARISH PRESIDENT: March 17, 2024
 APPROVED: DISAPPROVED:
 PARISH PRESIDENT: *Math Sewell*
 RETD/SECRETARY: March 19, 2024
 AT: 3:43pm RECD BY: *[Signature]*