

**Amendments to Town of New Shoreham Zoning Ordinance**  
**Article 4 Criteria for Special Use Permits, Section 425 Solar Energy Systems (A)**  
**Applicability & (B) Standards and Article 5 Performance Standards, Section 517 Solar**  
**Energy Systems (SES) (C) Definitions; (D) Applicability and Review Procedures & (F)**  
**Standards for Ground-Mounted Systems**

2024-05

It is ordained by the New Shoreham Town Council:

**§ 425 Solar Energy Systems.**

**A. Applicability:** Solar energy systems are considered accessory uses, and are permitted in all zoning districts, as provided in § 517.

A ground-mounted solar energy system, or solar canopy, ~~but not a solar pool heater system,~~ consisting of one or more installations with a total array size greater than 400 square feet, is allowed only upon the granting of a special use permit ~~by the Zoning Board of Review.~~ Such use shall also undergo development plan review ~~by the Planning Board under the provisions of § 704.~~ In no case shall a solar array size greater than 750 square feet be permitted ~~to interconnect to a single utility meter~~ if the primary use of the lot is residential.

~~A ground-mounted solar energy system, or solar canopy, consisting of one or more installations to be located in the minimum front setback of a property, is allowed only upon the granting of a special use permit by the Zoning Board of Review. Such use shall also undergo development plan review by the Planning Board under the provisions of § 704.~~

**B. Standards:** Prior to the approval of an application submitted under this section, the ~~Zoning Board of Review shall determine~~ ~~Applicant shall establish~~ that it meets the ~~general~~ criteria for a special use permit. The standards below listed in § 517, as applicable, and the following standards shall also apply.

1. Power and communication lines running between sub arrays of solar panels and to the off-site electric distribution system or interconnections with buildings onsite shall be buried underground.
2. Solar energy systems shall be designed and located to prevent reflective glare towards any inhabited building or roadway.
3. Solar energy systems shall be constructed and maintained in a way that minimizes the use of herbicides and pesticides. Vegetative cover, consisting of native plants, shall be maintained to prevent soil erosion.
4. Solar energy systems shall be sited and designed to minimize any negative aesthetic impact on viewsheds and abutting properties. ~~The siting of solar energy systems should prioritize limiting visibility from public roadways.~~ The design shall incorporate landscaping and design elements to visually screen the SES from public roadways and abutting properties ~~when reasonably possible.~~

## § 517 Solar Energy Systems (SES).

[Amended 3-1-2021 by Ord. No. 2021-01]

**A. Purpose:** The purpose of this section is to regulate the placement, design, installation and removal of solar energy systems to minimize any potential adverse impact they may have on the aesthetics, public health, and safety of the Town.

**B. Intent:** The Town encourages the use of accessory solar energy systems to reduce reliance on fossil fuels and to promote resiliency. The Town supports solar energy systems in locations which provide the greatest potential energy generation while actively striving to minimize the visual impacts to the existing landscape from which SES are visible from adjoining roadways and abutting properties.

**C. Definitions:** The following terms shall have the following meanings as used in this Section:

1. **Abandoned Solar Energy System:** A solar energy system that has reached the end of its useful life, is not fully maintained, or is disconnected with no plan for reconnection.

2. **Array Size:** measured as the length times width of each panel, with the area of all panels totaled and expressed as square feet. Array size is to be applied when calculating the contribution of a ground mounted solar energy system to lot coverage.

~~3. **Front Setback:** An open unoccupied space on the same lot with the structure extending the full width of the lot and situated between the street line and the front line of the structure projected to the side lines of the lot.~~

~~3.~~ **Ground-Mounted Solar Energy System:** A solar energy system that is structurally appended to the ground and is not supported to a structure or building.

~~5.~~ **4. Roof-Mounted Solar Energy System:** A solar energy system that is structurally appended to the roof of a code compliant structure.

~~6.~~ **5. Solar Canopy:** A solar energy system that is located on an elevated accessory structure that hosts solar panels and provides shelter to a parking area, driveway or walkway underneath.

~~7.~~ **6. Solar Energy System (SES):** The collective components and subsystems, including both solar thermal and photovoltaic, required to convert solar energy into electric energy or hot water. Solar energy systems are further defined by the following installation types: roof-mounted, ground-mounted, and solar canopies.

~~8. **Solar pool heating systems are exempted from this ordinance.**~~

~~7. **Solar pool heater system:** A type of SES which uses thermal energy from the sun to increase the temperature of pool water. The system uses solar collectors (heating plates) to heat water that circulates through the system and back to the pool.~~

**D. Applicability and Review Procedures:**

1. Solar energy systems are allowed in all zoning districts as accessory uses subordinate to the principal use of the parcel.

2. Ground mounted solar energy systems, or solar canopies, but not solar pool heater systems, with a total array size greater than 400 square feet may be allowed by special use permit. An application must be submitted to the Zoning Board of Review for a Special Use Permit under the provisions of § 425. Any such application shall also be subject to Development Plan Review by the Planning Board under the provisions of § 704.

3. Solar pool heater systems of a size less than 75 percent of the surface area of the pool are exempt from requiring a Special Use Permit under this section.

~~3.~~ 4. Any SES proposed within the Historic Overlay District shall require review and approval by the Historic District Commission.

~~4.~~ 5. Solar energy systems must be consistent with all applicable State and Federal fire and electrical safety codes and shall obtain all necessary statewide solar, building, and electrical permits from the Building Official prior to commencement of construction.

**E. Standards for Roof-Mounted Systems:** solar panels which are mounted on the roof of a building shall not extend above the highest point of the roof. In no case shall a solar panel extend beyond the edge of the roof, if the distance between the surface of the roof and the upper surface of the solar panels shall not be more than two feet, i.e. meaning the panel shall not be higher than 2 feet above the plane of the roof.

**F. Standards for Ground-Mounted Systems:**

1. Ground-mounted SES shall not exceed 10 feet in height, as measured from the natural grade to its highest point, including the top of any support structure or panel when adjusted to its highest seasonal position.

2. Ground-mounted SES shall comply with the minimum ~~side and rear~~ setbacks for accessory structures and uses for the zoning district in which the SES is located. Applications seeking placement of ground-mounted solar energy systems within the minimum front setback of a property shall require a Special Use Permit from the Zoning Board of Review.

3. Setback designations on non-paved Town or State roads shall be subject to the requirement of Zone RC or the site's specific zone, whichever is less.

~~4.~~ The first 250 square feet of array size shall be exempt in the calculation of lot coverage. Additional array size beyond 250 square feet shall be counted toward the maximum lot coverage.

4. Any ground mounted SES which exceeds 3 feet in height shall incorporate landscaping and design elements to visually screen the SES from public roadways and abutting properties.

**G. Standards for Solar Canopies:** Building height for solar canopies shall not exceed 12 feet in height. All other applicable dimensional standards required for the zoning district in which the proposed solar canopy is located shall apply.

**H. Abandonment:** Any abandoned solar energy system shall be removed within 180 days from the date of discontinued operations. Decommissioning shall consist of:

1. Physical removal and recycling of all solar energy system components.
2. Disposal of all solid and hazardous waste in accordance with all federal, state and local laws, regulations and ordinances.
3. Stabilization and re-vegetation of the site necessary to minimize erosion. The Building Official shall be authorized to direct the removal of abandoned SES and all of its components. The property owner shall remove the system within 90 days of said notice by the Building Official. If the owner or operator of an abandoned or decommissioned SES fails to remove the SES in accordance with the provisions of this section, the Town of New Shoreham may enter the property and physically remove all components of the SES at the cost of the property owner.

Posted: February 22, 2024  
Hearing: March 20, 2024  
Adopted: March 20, 2024  
Posted: March 21 – March 31, 2024  
Effective: March 20, 2024

Attest: Millicent Highet, MMC  
Town Clerk