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Sent: Friday, December 16, 2016 8:33 PM
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Subject: Need for solar energy system ordinance and interim moratorium

Dear Ann Arbor Planning Commission,

It has just come to our attention that the City of Ann Arbor

has no ordinance or regulations specific to the siting and installation of solar energy systems and that it is presently applying to its approval process ordinances developed for other purposes. We are profoundly dismayed by this oversight, especially since other towns have addressed the issue.

For example, the small town of Dublin, Georgia has developed such an ordinance, prefaced by the statement , *“WHEREAS improper installation of solar energy systems create a danger for the public and public safety workers, and the current Code of Ordinances of the City of Dublin is not sufficient to insure the orderly safe development of solar power in the City; and WHEREAS some installations of solar panels are unsightly and harm the aesthetics of the community; WHEREAS the ordinance will allow development of both residential and non-residential solar power, while protecting adjacent and surrounding land uses and values and protecting the health, safety and general welfare of the citizens of the City;*

THEREFORE, BE IT ORDAINED AND ESTABLISHED by the Mayor and City Council of the City of Dublin, Georgia as follows:”

[And this statement is followed by the regulations, which, interestingly, forbid solar panel arrays on front lawns]

The city of Tonka Bay, Minnesota in February 2016 established a 6-month MORATORIUM on construction and installation of solar energy systems while they were developing an ordinance.

Here in Ann Arbor, presently before the Planning Commission for approval at 2815 Brockman Boulevard is a ground-installed installation of a solar array 44 feet wide by nearly 9 feet high in a front yard. Yet the City has no ordinance specific to this construction. How can this be? We are troubled not only by the unsightliness of such an array, but especially by the fact that it's in a front yard. Such front-yard siting is very distressing owing to its accessibility to the school children who daily walk by the attractive nuisance that is such a construction, inviting climbing and risking falls, plus playing among the sharp edges and wires. It seems to be generally recognized that such large arrays, which may entice as “playground apparatus,” deserve the same precautions as swimming pools.

In an online publication the State of Massachusetts notes that large on-ground installations are frequently fenced and that some municipalities require signage showing the owner's name and emergency contact information.

Ann Arbor should and can do as well as Dublin, Georgia and Tonka Bay, Minnesota:

Ann Arbor needs to prohibit installation of solar energy systems until the City has an ordinance specific to them.

We wish to stress our view that ground-mounted solar panels should not be allowed in Ann Arbor's front yards and should take into consideration and preserve the character of a residential neighborhood.

An interim moratorium is particularly needed because without it, inappropriate installations will be carried out to the detriment of safety, neighborhood aesthetics, and community acceptance of solar energy. We therefore petition the Planning Commission and City Council to establish such a moratorium and to put in place an ordinance specific to solar energy systems.

With thanks for your prompt attention to this concern,

Henry A. Vanderploeg, Ph.D., and Barbara Vanderploeg, Ph.D.

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