



Quincy Joint Planning Commission
February 13, 2025
7:00 PM
Agenda

1. Call to Order and Pledge of Allegiance
2. Roll Call
3. Approval/Changes to Agenda
4. Public Comment
5. New Business
 - A. *Township – DTE Cold Creek Solar Site Plan Review*
6. Public Comment
7. Next Meeting- February 26, 2025 at 7 PM
8. Adjournment

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Michigan

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MCKENNA

February 5, 2025

Planning Commission
Quincy Township
11 N. Main St.
Quincy, MI 49082

Subject: DTE Solar Farm Site Plan Review for Planning Commission consideration

Dear Commissioners,

As requested, we have reviewed the request for a utility-scale solar energy system across 16 different parcels within Quincy Township. As you know, a utility-scale solar energy system requires Site Plan Approval and Special Land Use Review. The Special Land Use review will be addressed by the Township Board at their February 13, 2025 meeting. Below, we have analyzed the site for compliance with the Site Plan Review specific to utility-scale solar energy systems and presented our findings.

SITE PLAN REVIEW CRITERIA

Section 17.13 Standards for Site Plan and Sketch Plan Approval. The following criteria shall be used as a basis upon which site plans and sketch plans will be reviewed and approved, approved with conditions, or denied:

Standards A-M typically reviewed for a Site Plan will be reviewed here, some may not be relevant to a utility scale solar farm and standards for review of a utility scale solar farm can be found in Section 8.114.

A. Adequacy of information and compliance with Ordinance requirements. The site plan includes all required information in a complete and understandable form that provides an accurate description of the proposed uses, structures and site improvements. The site plan complies with all applicable Ordinance requirements, including but not limited to minimum floor space, height of building, lot size, yard space and density.

Appears to comply. The applicant has submitted a very comprehensive application dated received August 21, 2024. This application has been augmented by requests for additional information, most recently on January 30, 2025 which includes additional landscaping as required by the Zoning Board of Appeals approval of four (4) variances.

B. Site design characteristics. All elements of the site design are harmoniously and efficiently organized in relation to topography, parcel configuration, adjacent properties, traffic operations, adjacent streets and driveways, pedestrian access, and the type and size of buildings. The site is designed in a manner that promotes the normal and orderly development of surrounding property for uses permitted by this Ordinance.

Appears to comply. The site design characteristic have been vetted in a public hearing. Several members of the public spoke in opposition to the project. The Planning Commission recommended approval of the Special Land Use to the Township Board with the understanding that further review of the site plan would occur. At this time the application has received four (4) variances approved with conditions for additional

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screening. Additional screening has been provided by the applicant in sheet C109.3 dated received January 30, 2025 via email.

C. Site appearance and coordination. Site elements are designed and located so that the proposed development is aesthetically pleasing and harmonious with adjacent existing or future developments. All site features, including vehicle and pedestrian circulation, building orientation, landscaping, lighting, utilities, recreation facilities, and open space are harmonious and coordinated with adjacent properties.

Appears to comply. The applicant has demonstrated a willingness to work with the community to adequately screen the proposed utility-scale solar farm installation.

D. Preservation of site features. The site design preserves and conserves natural, cultural, historical and architectural site features, including but not limited to architecturally or historically significant buildings, archeological sites, wetlands, topography, tree-rows and hedgerows, wooded areas and significant individual trees.

Appears to comply. A decommissioning bond must be deposited as required by the Zoning Ordinance. The project is proposed for fields used for agricultural purposes.

E. Pedestrian access and circulation. The arrangement of public or common ways for pedestrian circulation connects to existing or planned sidewalks or bicycle pathways in the area, and is insulated as completely as possible from the vehicular circulation system. The site design complies with applicable federal, state, and local laws and regulations regarding barrier-free access.

Appears to not be applicable. The proposed utility-scale solar array will not be designed to be accessible to the public. It is anticipated that some repair work on the installation will be necessary over time and access for that purpose is designed in the project.

F. Vehicular access and circulation. Drives, streets, parking, site access and other vehicle-related elements are designed to minimize traffic conflicts on adjacent streets and promote safe and efficient traffic circulation within the site.

Appears to not be applicable. The proposed utility-scale solar array will not be accessible by public vehicles. It is anticipated that some repair work on the installation will be necessary over time and access for that purpose is designed in the project.

G. Building design and architecture. Building design and architecture relate to and are harmonious with the surrounding neighborhood with regard to texture, scale, mass, proportion, materials and color.

Appears to not be applicable.

H. Parking and loading. Off-street parking lots and loading zones are arranged, located and designed to accommodate the intensity of proposed uses, minimize conflicts with adjacent uses, enhance the character of the neighborhood, and promote shared-use of common facilities by adjoining properties.

Appears to not be applicable.



I. Landscaping and screening. Landscaping and screening are provided in a manner that adequately buffers adjacent land uses and screens off-street parking, mechanical equipment, loading and unloading areas and storage areas from adjacent residential areas and public rights-of-way.

Appears to comply. The applicant submitted a visual analysis of the project, and most recently a landscaping plan, sheet C109.3 which shows additional screening for several of the non-participating households. The visual analysis depicts the existing natural vegetation which will screen the proposed installation from view from various public streets.

J. Exterior lighting. All exterior lighting fixtures are designed, arranged and shielded to minimize glare and light trespass, prevent night blindness and vision impairments, and maximize security.

Appears to not be applicable.

K. Impact upon public services. The impact upon public services will not exceed the existing or planned capacity of such services, and adequate public services (including but not limited to utilities (water, sanitary & storm sewers, county drains, natural gas, electricity and telephone), streets, police and fire protection, public schools and sidewalks/bicycle paths) are available or provided to the site, and are designed with sufficient capacity and durability to properly serve the development.

Appears to comply. The Fire Department has signed off on the application. The proposed installation will result in more electricity generation for the energy grid.

L. Drainage and soil erosion. Drainage systems, stormwater facilities, and soil erosion, sedimentation and dust control measures are arranged, located and designed to promote shared use of common facilities by adjoining properties. Adjoining properties, public rights-of-way and the capacity of the public storm drainage system will not be adversely affected by stormwater runoff and sedimentation.

Appears to comply. The Drain Commissioner has signed off on the proposed application.

M. Emergency access and vulnerability to hazards. All sites and buildings are designed to allow convenient and direct emergency access, and the level of vulnerability to injury or loss from incidents involving hazardous materials or processes will not exceed the Township's emergency response capabilities.

Appears to comply. As stated earlier the Fire Department has signed off on the application.

Section 8.114 outlines what a utility scale solar farm is and how it should be regulated:

- 1. Setbacks.** Section 8.114.C.2 of the Zoning Ordinance states the minimum setback applying to utility-scale solar energy facilities adjacent to a parcel with a residential dwelling unit is 125 feet from the parcel lot line. However, if the non-participating parcel is surrounded by more than two sides, the setback shall be 1,000 feet. Additionally, the solar energy system must be located at least 500 feet from the nearest corner of the nearest



dwelling unit. **Complies as varied.**

The Zoning Board of Appeals granted four (4) setback variances to this applicant for setbacks from non-participating households.

2. **Landscaping.** Section 8.114.C.4 of the Zoning Ordinance states landscaping is required to screen against all property lines if the adjacent parcel is either non-participating, if the adjacent parcel contains one or more dwelling units, or if the adjacent parcel is 5 acres or less in area. Landscape screening requires a staggered double row of evergreen trees at least 6 feet tall and no more than 25 feet apart. The original application did not include any additional landscaping, though landscaping is required to screen from adjacent residential uses. The majority of participating parcels are wooded along the parcel lot lines.

However, some additional landscaping has been offered associated with the four (4) variances granted. The applicant submitted sheet C109.3 on January 30, 2025 via email to satisfy this requirement and the conditions made by the ZBA at their January 13, 2025 meeting.

Appears to comply.



Figure 1: Map of Participating Parcels

3. **Noise.** Noise emanating from solar energy systems must not exceed 55 decibels, measured from any residence on a non-participating parcel. The applicant has included a sound modeling study with the received site plan materials. The sound modeling study, conducted by Burns & McDonnell, anticipates that the level of ambient noise at participating parcel lines would be less than 55 dBA, which would mean even less sound measured at the nearest non-participating dwelling unit. **Complies.** This complies with the sound



requirements of the Zoning Ordinance.

4. **Drainage.** Section 8.114.C.6 of the Zoning Ordinance requires the applicant to provide written confirmation from the County Drain Commissioner that stormwater drainage will not be impacted. The applicant has not submitted a written confirmation from the Drain Commissioner. Please see the attached email. The Drain Commissioner has signed off on the project as proposed.
5. **Glare.** Section 8.114.C.7 prohibits solar energy systems from producing any glare that negatively impacts any adjacent parcel or roadway. The applicant has submitted a glare modeling study performed by Burns & McDonnell dated August 21, 2024, which states that one instance of “yellow” glare has been identified that would affect most observers for a limited time window. The applicant has proposed an operational condition that would utilize software to ensure that the panels in question are angled to avoid glare during the time window identified. The attorney for the client has responded with the following statement (please see the following):

“To mitigate the glare potential associated with Solar Block 10 and Observation Point 42 (see Glare Study dated August 21, 2024), DTE shall impose operational controls between November 15 and January 15 that adjust the solar panel angle of incidence to alleviate the potential for glare that could occur between 8:30 a.m. and 9:30 a.m.”
6. **Fencing.** Section 8.114.C.8 requires clusters of solar panels to be surrounded by a 6-foot-high fence with a self-locking gate and the design of said fence must be approved by the Township Board. The applicant has stated the fence surrounding all panels will be 7 feet tall in accordance with the National Electric Code.
7. **Interconnection Agreement.** Section 8.114.C.13 states that no solar energy system shall be installed until evidence has been given to the Township that the electric utility company has agreed to an interconnection agreement with the electrical grid, or a power purchase agreement. The agreement must be submitted to the Township prior to construction. The applicant has submitted information confirming they are in the process of applying for an interconnection agreement with the Midcontinent Independent System Operator (MISO). A copy of the approved interconnection agreement is required to be submitted to the Township once it is finalized prior to construction.
8. **Liability Insurance.** Section 8.114.C.11 of the Zoning Ordinance requires a general liability policy covering at least \$1 million per occurrence and \$1 million in the aggregate. The applicant has provided an indemnity agreement between the Township and DTE Electric Company of not more than \$10,000,000 that holds harmless the Township and all its trustees, officers, employees, and agents against any losses or liabilities relating to the site. This agreement must be reviewed and signed by the Township Board prior to the beginning of construction.
9. **Decommissioning Plan.** Section 8.114.D requires the applicant to submit a decommissioning bond to be



reviewed every 5 years and acceptable to the Planning Commission and Township Board. The applicant has submitted an estimated decommissioning cost and a form of decommissioning surety bond for the Township to sign. Should the Township find the surety bond acceptable, then this condition shall be fulfilled.

PLANNING COMMISSION ACTION

If the Planning Commission finds that there is sufficient evidence presented the Commission can move to approve, approve with conditions, or deny the site plan. Draft motions are included below.

The Planning Commission **approves without conditions** the request for Site Plan Review for a utility-scale solar energy system across 16 different parcels within Quincy Township. These parcels are as identified by DTE for easements:

Owner Name	Parcel Number
Bostic Michael Nicole	080-007-100-015-00
Bowerman Brian Zail	080-007-400-005-00
Bowerman Brian Zail	080-007-400-005-01
Dryer David and Julie	080-017-300-010-00
Dryer David and Julie	080-018-200-020-00
Dryer David and Julie	080-018-400-005-00
Friend Bernard D Karen J	080-066-100-005-01
Friend Bernard D Karen J	080-007-100-010-00
Friend Bernard D Karen J	080-007-100-020-99
Ganch Larae V	080-018-400-005-99
Ganch Larae V	080-017-300-010-02
Knirk Linda Dick	080-017-100-005-99
Knirk Linda Dick	080-017-200-005-00
Knirk Linda Dick	080-017-400-020-00
Messenger Daryl Judy	080-006-300-020-00
Miller Christian Joan Marlin	080-007-200-010-00

The Planning Commission **approves with conditions** the request for Site Plan Review for a utility-scale solar energy system across 16 different parcels within Quincy Township. The parcel numbers are listed above. The conditions are:

1. That the new attorney be able to review the Liability Insurance Paperwork and the Decommissioning Agreement, and on satisfactory resolution of any comments by the new attorney the Township will finalize the agreements with DTE. The decommissioning agreement requires DTE to deliver the bond to the township prior to the start of construction. The Township then holds the bond for the life of the project.
2. A copy of the approved interconnection agreement is required to be submitted to the Township once it is finalized prior to construction.



3. The hours of construction shall be 7 AM to 7 PM. Construction may occur 7 days per week, but pile driving shall be prohibited on Sundays.

The Planning Commission **denies** the request for Site Plan Review for a utility-scale solar energy system across 16 different parcels within Quincy Township. The parcel numbers are listed above.

Please let us know if you have any questions.

Respectfully submitted,
McKENNA

Christopher Khorey, AICP
Vice President

Hillary Taylor,
Senior Planner



December 18, 2024

Michael Hard
Branch County Drain Commissioner
31 Division Street
Coldwater, Michigan 49036

Re: Cold Creek Solar

Drain Commissioner Hard:

Thank you for meeting with our team to discuss DTE Electric Company's (DTE) engineering plans for Cold Creek Solar, a 100-MW solar energy facility planned for portions of the townships of Coldwater, Quincy, and Butler.

Cold Creek Solar will be constructed in a manner similar to the recently completed Sauk Solar Park in Union Township. Prior to the start of construction, silt fencing will be installed and the solar array sites planted with a stabilizing seed mix to hold the soil during construction. The solar panels will be mounted on a terrain-following racking system supported by piling foundations, which allows the solar arrays to be installed with minimal grading.

Because the solar panels will track the movement to the sun from east to west over the course of the day, the rows of panels will run north-south. The racking piles will be spaced 22 feet apart, leaving a disconnected gap of at least 14.5 feet when the panels are facing up, and greater when the panels tilted or in stow position. Post-construction, the row gap will be planted with deep-rooted groundcover plants and pollinators to create a permanent stabilized vegetative strip capable of functioning as a pervious surface and maintaining post-construction runoff rates that do not exceed existing runoff rates.

DTE's approach to stormwater management requires existing field tiles to remain operational so that the land may be restored to agricultural use after the project ceases operations. Drain tile maps are collected and reviewed as part of the engineering of the site layout. Where not available, drain tile is mapped based on field surveys. Where existing tiles conflict with new infrastructure, the tile will be repaired or new tile installed.

During construction, soil compaction is mitigated through the use of tracked equipment that moves in a north-south direction parallel to the racking rows. Follow-on equipment uses the same tracks as the first equipment to move across the work field. Other heavy equipment is restricted to the gravel access roads and staging areas.

Coldwater and Butler Townships have approved the project subject to the condition that DTE provide evidence of your approval of its stormwater management plan, including its maintenance plan for agricultural drain tile in the project footprint. The Joint Quincy Planning Commission has recommended a similar condition to the Quincy Township Board. We therefore ask that you indicate your approval of DTE's stormwater management plan with the understanding that DTE will continue working with you to satisfy your office's requirements for drain crossings and public outlets.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M. Wagner', followed by a horizontal line.

Matthew Wagner
Manager of Renewable Energy Development

Approved:

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Michael Hard', followed by a horizontal line.
Michael Hard, Drain Commissioner



January 21, 2024

Quincy Fire Department
39 E Chicago Street
Quincy, Michigan 49082

Attn: Fire Chief Michael Sherman

Re: Cold Creek Solar – Quincy and Butler Townships – Access Road Lane Width Approval

Chief Sherman:

The Quincy Joint Planning Commission and Butler Townships Board have each approved special use permits allowing DTE Electric Company (DTE) to install and operate a 100 MW solar energy facility in portions of Sections 6, 7, and 18 of Quincy Township and a portion of Section 31 of Butler Township subject to various conditions. (The facility also covers other land in Coldwater Township.)

DTE's civil engineering plans propose gravel access roads with a 12-foot wide drive lane and a 4-foot clear shoulder on either side of the drive lane. The Quincy Joint Planning Commission and Butler Township Board each approved this design subject to the Branch County Road Commission approving the access road locations and design and confirmation of the Fire Chief's approval of the access drive width.

Enclosed are the plan sheets prepared for each township that show the access road details. We ask that you please confirm that you are satisfied with the access road width from an emergency vehicle access perspective by counter-signing this letter in the space provided below.

Sincerely,

Jeffrey Haines
Site Manager

Approved:

Quincy Fire Department

By: 

Michael Sherman

Its: Fire Chief