



Zoning Board of Appeals
Gratiot County Department of Community Development
214 E Center St., Ithaca, MI 48847
Phone (989) 875-5201

Agenda of the October 2nd, 2025 Meeting

The Gratiot County Zoning Board of Appeals Meeting will be **Thursday, October 2nd, 2025** beginning at **4:00p.m.** in the Board of Commissioner's Room at Gratiot County Courthouse, 214 E Center St., Ithaca, MI 48847.

1. Call to Order
2. Pledge of Allegiance
3. Roll Call
4. Approval of Agenda
5. Approval of **July 10th, 2025** Minutes
 - a. Revision to include required recordings of Zoning Ordinance Section Chapter 17b.
6. Public Comment
7. **Variance Request of Zoning Ordinance Chapter 2.11 C Solar Energy Systems 1B. and Chapter 2.11 C Solar Energy Systems 3E for Parcel #07-019-009-10**
 - a. Open Public Hearing
 - b. Explanation of Request
 - c. Open Public Comment
 - d. Close Public Comment
 - e. Zoning Administrator's Report
 - f. Discussion/Questions
 - g. Close Public Hearing
 - h. Vote to Approve/Approve with Conditions/Deny
8. Old Business
9. New Business
 - a. Training in January
10. Committee and Special Reports
11. General Comments from Public for Items Not on Agenda
12. Adjournment



Department of Community Development
Gratiot County Courthouse
214 E Center St., Ithaca, MI 48847
Phone (989) 875-5201 -Fax (989) 875-5260

Application for Variance

Procedure: Submit this completed application and 12 copies of a detailed site plan with the fee of \$445.00 to the Gratiot County Permits Office. The Zoning Board of Appeals will then schedule a Public Hearing to decide upon the request for a Variance. All adjacent property owners of the parcel in question will be notified and encouraged to attend the Public Hearing to state opinions. Notice of the Public Hearing will be published in the Gratiot County Herald.

Date: 8/19/25

Applicant Name: Harvest Solar

Address: 6735 E Polk Rd, Ithaca

Phone: 517-788-8800 x 751

Zoning of the Property: AG

Legal Description of the property: _____

COM AT SE COR OF SW1/4 OF SE 1/4, TH W 466 FT, N 297 FT, W 40 FT, N 1885.5 FT, W 204 FT, N 920 FT, E 710 FT, S TO POB
SEC 19 T11N R1W 39.93A PA 116 L 953 P 1104 #29-8875A-123177

Zoning Ordinance Article and Section Number: Chapter 2C Section 1B (Screening);

Names and Address' of Adjacent Property Owners: Chapter 2C Section 3E (lowedge)

Huron Pork LLC - 11304 Edgewater Suite A, Allendale, MI 49401

Applicant Signature: *Cassidy Cecott* Date: 8/19/25

Department Use Only: _____

Case No.: _____ Request: Approved/Denied Date: _____

Zoning Official Signature: _____

1. Review - Shall hear and decide appeals from and review any order, requirement, decision, or determination made by the Zoning Administrator in the administration of this Ordinance.
2. Interpretation - Shall have the power to:
 - a. Hear and decide upon requests for the interpretation of the provisions of this Ordinance.
 - b. Determine the precise location of the boundary lines between zoning districts when there is dissatisfaction with a decision regarding said subject made by the Zoning Administrator.
 - c. Classify a use that is not specifically mentioned along with a comparable permitted or prohibited use for the purpose of the use regulations in any zoning district.
3. Variances
 - a. Non-Use Variances. The Zoning Board of Appeals shall have the power to authorize upon appeal specific variances from such dimensional requirements as lot area and width regulations, building height and bulk regulations, yard width and depth regulations, and such requirements as off-street parking and loading space as specified in this Ordinance when all the basic conditions listed below are satisfied.
 - i. Will not be contrary to the public interest and will not be contrary to the spirit and intent of this Ordinance.
 - ii. Will not cause any adverse effect to property in the vicinity or in the Zoning District or the County.
 - iii. Is not one where the specific conditions pertaining to the property are so general or recurrent in nature as to make the formulation of a general regulation for such conditions practicable.
 - iv. Relates only to property that is under control of the applicant.
 - v. Affects only property subject to exceptional or extraordinary circumstances or conditions that do not generally apply to other property or uses in the vicinity, and have not resulted from any act or omission of the applicant.
 - vi. Must be granted in order to avoid practical difficulties or unnecessary hardship that would result from enforcement of the strict letter of this Ordinance.

Amendment of Gratiot County Zoning Ordinance

AN ORDINANCE TO AMEND THE GRATIOT COUNTY ZONING ORDINANCE REQUIREMENTS FOR SOLAR ENERGY SYSTEMS AND SOLAR FARMS FOR THE COUNTY-ZONED TOWNSHIPS OF ELBA, HAMILTON, LAFAYETTE, NEWARK, NORTH STAR, AND SUMNER. THIS ORDINANCE AMENDMENT WAS ADOPTED BY THE GRATIOT COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS ON

PREAMBLE

It is hereby determined by the Gratiot County Board of Commissioners that good and reasonable cause exists to amend the Gratiot County Zoning Ordinance as ordained below:

THE COUNTY OF GRATIOT HEREBY ORDAINS

That the Gratiot County Zoning Ordinance be amended as follows:

CHAPTER 1 DEFINITIONS, SECTION 1.19 DEFINITION “S”

Insert the following new definitions:

SOLAR ENERGY SYSTEM: A single residential or small business-scale solar energy conversion system consisting of building-mounted panels, ground-mounted solar arrays, or other solar energy fixtures, and associated control or conversion electronics that will be used to produce utility power primarily for on-site use.

SOLAR FARM: A utility-scaled commercial facility that converts sunlight into electricity, whether by photovoltaics, concentrating solar thermal devices or any other various experimental solar technologies for the primary purpose of wholesale or retail sales of generated electricity off-site.

Alphabetize accordingly

CHAPTER 2 GENERAL PROVISIONS, SECTION 2.11 ACCESSORY USES

Insert the following under Accessory Uses

C. Solar energy systems are permitted as an accessory use in all zoning districts.

An on-site use solar energy system (see Section 1.19 for definition) is intended to first serve the needs of the private owner. Systems may be building-mounted or ground-mounted. Small systems may be approved through the issuance of both, a zoning compliance permit and a building permit, provided the applications and installations meet the requirements set forth in this section. If the zoning administrator believes that the solar energy system may have an adverse impact on the health and safety of the public, it may require the applicant to apply for Site Plan Approval to the Planning Commission.

1. General Requirements:

- a. Setbacks: All small solar energy systems shall maintain a minimum setback of twenty (20) feet from all property lines.
- b. Mechanical equipment must be screened from street and neighboring residences by fencing or landscaping.
- c. A site plan, drawn to scale, shall show all existing and proposed structures, driveways, adjacent structures within 100 feet, and any other information required by the Zoning Administrator, Building Inspector or Planning Commission that is necessary to determine compliance with this ordinance.
- d. Complete prepared site plans signed by the responsible parties shall not apply to applications proposing:
 - i. Building-mounted solar panels
 - ii. Ground-mounted solar panels that do not exceed 8,000 square feet.

2. Building-mounted solar panels:

- a. An Administrative Review is required of all building-mounted solar energy collectors permitted as an accessory use. The application should include the following:
 - i. Photographs of the property's existing conditions.
 - ii. Plot plan to indicate where the solar energy equipment is to be installed on the property.
- b. Solar energy collectors that are mounted on the roof of a building shall not project more than five (5) feet above the highest point of the roof but, in any event, shall not exceed the maximum building height limitation for the zoning district in which it is located, and shall not project beyond the eaves of the roof.
- c. Solar energy collectors that are wall-mounted shall not exceed the height of the building wall to which they are attached.
- d. Solar energy collectors shall not be mounted on a building wall that is parallel to an adjacent public right-of-way.
- e. Solar energy collectors, and the installation and use thereof, shall comply with the County construction code, the electrical code, and other applicable County construction codes.

3. Ground-mounted solar panels:
 - a. Shall not be installed on parcels less than one (1) acre in size.
 - b. Shall only be located in the side or rear yard.
 - c. The maximum ground area occupied by solar panels and associated paved surfaces is twenty (20) percent of lot size.
 - d. If more than 4,000 square feet of impervious surface is proposed, a drainage plan must be submitted with the permit application.
 - e. The maximum ground-mounted panel height is eight (8) feet, measured from grade to the top of the panel.
 - f. Panels shall be screened from residential districts and public rights-of-way by a greenbelt and/or six (6) foot privacy fence.

CHAPTER 4 AG-AGRICULTURAL DISTRICT, SECTION 4.4 SPECIAL LAND USES

Insert to the List of Special Land Uses

Solar Farms permitted by special land use in the AG districts.

CHAPTER 5 RP-RURAL PRESERVATION DISTRICT, SECTION 5.3 SPECIAL LAND USES

Insert to the List of Special Land Uses

Solar Farms permitted by special land use in the RP districts.

CHAPTER 6 RR-RURAL RESIDENTIAL DISTRICT, SECTION 6.3 SPECIAL LAND USES

Insert to the List of Special Land Uses

Solar Farms permitted by special land use in the RR districts.

CHAPTER 12 I-1-INDUSTRIAL DISTRICT, SECTION 12.3 SPECIAL LAND USES

Insert to the List of Special Land Uses

Solar Farms permitted by special land use in the I-1 districts.

CHAPTER 14 SITE PLAN REVIEW, SECTION 14.4 SITE PLAN REVIEW



Gratiot County
 Department of Community Development
 214 E Center St., Ithaca, MI 48847 / permits@gratiotmi.com / (989) 875-5201

Zoning Administrator Report

Elba, Hamilton, Lafayette, Newark, North Star and Sumner Townships

1. Applicant Name / Property Owner (If Different) APPLICANT NAME: Harvest Solar – Cassidy Cecott PROPERTY OWNER NAME: Huron Pork LLC	Site Photo: 
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2. Property Information		
ADDRESS: 6735 E Polk Rd.	CITY/VILLAGE: Ithaca	
STATE: MI	ZIP CODE: 48847	PARCEL #: 07-019-009-10
TOWNSHIP: <input type="checkbox"/> ELBA <input type="checkbox"/> HAMILTON <input type="checkbox"/> LAFAYETTE <input type="checkbox"/> NEWARK <input type="checkbox"/> NORTH STAR <input type="checkbox"/> SUMNER		
LEGAL DESCRIPTION: COM AT SE COR OF SW1/4 OF SE 1/4, TH W 466 FT, N 297 FT, W 40 FT, N 1885.5 FT, W 204 FT, N 920 FT, E 710 FT, S TO POB SEC 19 T11N R1W 39.93A PA 116 L 953 P 1104 #29-8875A-123177		
ZONING DISTRICT: AG		
EXISTING LAND USE: AG		
ZONING DISTRICT OF ADJOINING PARCELS: North AG South AG East AG West AG		
EXISTING LAND USE OF ADJOINING PARCELS: North AG South AG/ RES East AG West AG		

FINDINGS OF FACT (Items critical to the site and review of request): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Parcel Dimensions: See Site Photo and Legal Description. ➤ Size/Location of other Buildings on Parcel Approx 120' x 490' AG bldg and 75' x 560' AG bldg. ➤ Location/Depth of ROW and/or Easement 33' ROW ➤ Any Existing Wetlands/Floodplains/Drains NONE ➤ Adjoining Water Bodies/Distance to Water Bodies See Site Photo ➤ Other Permits Obtained Prior to Request (EGLE, MDOT, DNR, Road Commission, Well/Septic, Etc.) N/A ➤ Well/Septic Placement (If Applicable) N/A

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Key Utility Information (Gas transmission lines, overhead electrical transmission lines, water, sewer, etc.) N/A ➤ Zoning History (Previous permits, SLUPs, variances, nonconformities, etc.) Variance granted December 20th, 2023 for Chapter 2C Section 1B (Screening Requirement) and Chapter 2c Section 3e (Maximum height from grade to the top of the panel) with unnecessary hardship being the land being unable to yield a reasonable return if required to meet this 8' maximum height requirement as the proposed size of the panels was the most energy efficient with the least amount of ground disturbance to meet the needs of the farming operation and smaller panels would require more panels be installed which would take up more useable farmland. 	
3. Request under Review	
Variance of Chapter 2C Section 1B: Mechanical equipment must be screened from street and neighboring residences by fencing or landscaping and Chapter 2C Section 3E: The maximum ground-mounted panel height is eight (8) feet, measured from grade to the top of the panel.	
4. Ordinance Standards (Include Section # & Page #) Use Findings of Fact, submitted site plan, zoning history, parcel information, etc. to indicate compliance with standards.	
Chapter 2C Section 1 General Requirements a. Setbacks: All small solar energy systems shall maintain a minimum setback of twenty (20) feet from all property lines.	Site plan shows front yard setback – 215' 11", rear yard setback – 841' 10", East (right side) setback – 74' 6.25", and West (left side) setback – 119' 5.25". Requirement met.
Chapter 2C Section 1 General Requirements b. Mechanical equipment must be screened from street and neighboring residences by fencing or landscaping.	Requesting variance of this requirement; to not have screening present.
Chapter 2C Section 1 General Requirements c. A Site plan, drawn to scale, shall show all existing and proposed structures, driveways, adjacent structures within 100 feet, and any other information required by the Zoning Administrator, Building Inspector, or Planning Commission that is necessary to determine compliance with this ordinance.	Site plan shows existing and proposed structures, driveways, adjacent structures within 100', and setbacks. Requirement met.
Chapter 2C Section 1 General Requirements d. Complete prepared site plans signed by the responsible parties shall not apply to applications proposing: i. Building-mounted solar panels ii. Ground-mounted solar panels that do not exceed 8,000 sq. ft.	Proposed ground-mounted solar panels array area 18,310.75 sq.ft. Site plan needs to be signed by the responsible parties (Harvest Solar). Requirement <u>NOT</u> met.
Chapter 2C Section 3 Ground-mounted solar panels: a. Shall not be installed on parcels less than one (1) acre in size.	Parcel is 40 acres. Requirement is met.
Chapter 2C Section 3 Ground-mounted solar panels: b. Shall only be located in the side or rear yard.	Proposed panels are located in the "rear" (behind the halfway point of the parcel). Requirement is met.
Chapter 2C Section 3 Ground-mounted solar panels: c. The maximum ground area occupied by solar panels and associated paved surfaces is twenty (20) percent of lot size.	The parcel is 40 acres (1,742,400 sq.ft.). 20% of 40 acres is 8 acres (348,480 sq.ft.). Existing ground-mounted solar panels are 10,204.22sq.ft. and proposed ground-mounted solar panels are 18,310.75sq.ft. for a total of 28,514.97 sq.ft. (.65

	acres) or .01% of the lot size. Requirement is met.
Chapter 2C Section 3 Ground-mounted solar panels: d. If more than 4,000 square feet of impervious surface is proposed, a drainage plan must be submitted with the permit application.	Impervious surface is define as any hard-surfaced area that prevents water from soaking into the ground. The total impervious surface is calculated by project, not individual surface – total impervious surface is 18,310.75 sq.ft. Drainage plan is not included. Requirement NOT met.
Chapter 2C Section 3 Ground-mounted solar panels: e. The maximum ground-mounted panel height is eight (8) feet, measured from grade to the top of the panel.	Requesting variance of this requirement; to not have screening present.
Chapter 2C Section 3 Ground-mounted solar panels: f. Panels shall be screened from residential districts and public rights-of-way by a greenbelt and/or six (6) foot privacy fence.	Requesting variance of this requirement under Chapter 2 Section 1; to not have screening present.
Section 17.4 Duties and Powers of the Zoning Board of Appeals A3 Variances a. Non-Use Variances. The Zoning Board of Appeals shall have the power to authorize upon appeal specific variances from such dimensional requirements as lot area and width regulations, building height and bulk regulations, yard width and depth regulations, and such requirements as off-street parking and loading space as specified in this Ordinance when all the basic conditions listed below are satisfied.	
Section 17.4 Duties and Powers of the Zoning Board of Appeals A3 Variances A. i. Will not be contrary to the public interest and will not be contrary to the spirit and intent of this Ordinance.	TBD by ZBA. Yes or no?
Section 17.4 Duties and Powers of the Zoning Board of Appeals A3 Variances A. ii. Will not cause any adverse effect to property in the vicinity or in the Zoning District or the County.	TBD by ZBA. Yes or no?
Section 17.4 Duties and Powers of the Zoning Board of Appeals A3 Variances A. iii. Is not one where the specific conditions pertaining to the property are so general or recurrent in nature as to make the formulation of a general regulation for such conditions practicable.	TBD by ZBA. Is the request common in which a special exemption is not necessary, a change to the language of the ordinance is more accurate?
Section 17.4 Duties and Powers of the Zoning Board of Appeals A3 Variances A. iv. Relates only to property that is under control of the applicant.	Yes, requirement is met.
Section 17.4 Duties and Powers of the Zoning Board of Appeals A3 Variances A. v. Affects only property subject to exceptional or extraordinary circumstances or conditions that do not generally apply to other property or uses in the vicinity and have not resulted from any act or omission of the applicant.	TBD by ZBA.

Section 17.4 Duties and Powers of the Zoning Board of Appeals A3 Variances A. vi. Must be granted in order to avoid practical difficulties or unnecessary hardship that would result from enforcement of the strict letter of this Ordinance.

TBD by ZBA. List practical difficulties or unnecessary hardship that would result from enforcement of the ordinance.

5. Sample Motions

Approve - Motion to approve variance of Chapter 2C Section 1B: Mechanical equipment must be screened from street and neighboring residences by fencing or landscaping and Chapter 2C Section 3E: The maximum ground-mounted panel height is eight (8) feet, measured from grade to the top of the panel as all conditions from Chapter 17.4 are met and the unnecessary hardship is _____ and the exceptional/extraordinary circumstances or conditions of the property are _____.

Approve with Conditions - Motion to approve variance of Chapter 2C Section 1B: Mechanical equipment must be screened from street and neighboring residences by fencing or landscaping and Chapter 2C Section 3E: The maximum ground-mounted panel height is eight (8) feet, measured from grade to the top of the panel as all conditions from Chapter 17.4 are met and the unnecessary hardship is _____ and the exceptional/extraordinary circumstances or conditions of the property are _____ with the following conditions: _____.

Deny - Motion to deny the variance of Chapter 2C Section 1B: Mechanical equipment must be screened from street and neighboring residences by fencing or landscaping and Chapter 2C Section 3E: The maximum ground-mounted panel height is eight (8) feet, measured from grade to the top of the panel due to the following conditions not being met: _____.