

**ELMWOOD TOWNSHIP**

**ORDINANCE NO. 112**

**AN ORDINANCE TO AMEND THE ZONING ORDINANCE  
TO IMPLEMENT REGULATIONS REGARDING SOLAR ENERGY**

The Township of Elmwood ordains:

**SECTION 1. ADD DEFINITIONS TO SECTION 21.01.**

The following definitions are hereby added to Section 21.01 of the Zoning Ordinance and shall read as follows:

**BUILDING INTEGRATED PHOTOVOLTAICS (BIPVs):** A Private or Commercial Solar Energy System that is integrated into the structure of a building, such as solar roof tiles and solar shingles.

**SOLAR ENERGY SYSTEM:** Any part of a system that collects or stores solar radiation or energy for the purpose of transforming it into any other form of usable energy, including but not limited to the collection and transfer of heat created by solar energy to any other medium by any means.

**PRIVATE SOLAR ENERGY SYSTEM:** A Solar Energy System used exclusively for private purposes and not utilized for any commercial resale of any energy, except for the sale of surplus electrical energy back to the electrical grid.

**COMMERCIAL SOLAR ENERGY SYSTEM:** A Solar Energy System where the principal design, purpose or use of such system is to provide energy to off-site uses or the wholesale or retail sale of generated electricity to any person or entity.

**ROOF OR BUILDING MOUNTED SOLAR ENERGY SYSTEM:** A Private or Commercial Solar Energy System attached to or mounted on any roof or exterior wall of any principal or accessory building, but excluding BIPVs.

**GROUND MOUNTED SOLAR ENERGY SYSTEM:** A Private or Commercial Solar Energy System that is not attached to or mounted to any roof or exterior wall of any principal or accessory building.

**SECTION 2. ADDITION OF SECTION 12.17 TO ZONING ORDINANCE  
ENTITLED "SOLAR ENERGY SYSTEMS".**

Section 12.17 entitled "SOLAR ENERGY SYSTEMS" is hereby added to the Township's Zoning Ordinance. The section shall read in its entirety as follows:

**Section 12.17. SOLAR ENERGY SYSTEMS.**

**A. GENERAL REQUIREMENTS.** All Solar Energy Systems are subject to the following general requirements:

1. All Solar Energy Systems must conform to the provisions of this Ordinance and all County, State, and Federal regulations and safety requirements as well as applicable industry standards.
2. Solar Energy Systems shall be located or placed so that concentrated solar glare shall not be directed toward or onto nearby properties or roadways at any time of the day.

**B. PRIVATE SOLAR ENERGY SYSTEMS.**

1. Private Solar Energy System BIVPs. Private Solar Energy System BIVPs shall be permitted in all zoning districts, provided such BIVPs conform to applicable County, State and Federal regulations and safety requirements, including the Michigan Building Code. A building permit shall be required for the installation of any BIVPs.

2. Roof or Building Mounted Private Solar Energy Systems. Roof or building mounted Private Solar Energy Systems shall be considered an accessory use in all zoning districts, subject to the following requirements:

- a) No part of the Solar Energy System erected on a roof shall extend beyond the peak of the roof. If the Solar Energy System is mounted on a building in an area other than the roof, no part of the Solar Energy System shall extend beyond the wall on which it is mounted.
- b) No part of a Solar Energy System mounted on a roof shall be installed closer than three (3) feet from the edges of the roof, the peak, or eave or valley in order to maintain pathways of accessibility.
- c) No part of a Solar Energy System mounted on a roof shall extend more than two (2) feet above the surface of the roof.
- d) In the event that a roof or building mounted Solar Energy System has been abandoned (meaning not having been in operation for a period of one (1) year), it shall be removed by the property owner within six (6) months from the date of abandonment.
- e) A building permit shall be required for installation of roof or building mounted Private Solar Energy Systems.

3. Ground Mounted Private Solar Energy Systems. Ground mounted Private Solar Energy Systems shall be considered an accessory use in all zoning districts, subject to the following requirements:

- a) Prior to the installation of a ground mounted Solar Energy System, the property owner shall submit a site plan to the Zoning Administrator. The site plan

shall include setbacks, panel size, and the location of property lines, buildings, fences, greenbelts, and road right of ways. The site plan must be drawn to scale.

b) A ground mounted Solar Energy System shall not exceed the maximum building height for adjacent accessory buildings, but in no case shall the maximum height of any ground mounted Solar Energy System exceed fifteen (15) feet above the ground when oriented at maximum tilt.

c) A ground mounted Solar Energy System shall be located in the rear yard and shall meet the rear yard setback requirements applicable in the zoning district in which the Solar Energy System will be located.

d) All power transmission or other lines, wires or conduits from a ground mounted Solar Energy System to any building or other structure shall be located underground. If batteries are used as part of the ground mounted Solar Energy System, they must be placed in a secured container or enclosure.

e) There shall be greenbelt screening around any ground mounted Solar Energy Systems and equipment associated with the system to obscure, to the greatest extent possible, the Solar Energy System from any adjacent residences. The greenbelt shall consist of shrubbery, trees, or other non-invasive plant species that provide a visual screen. In lieu of a planting greenbelt, a decorative fence (meeting the requirements of this Ordinance applicable to fences) may be used.

f) No more than 20% of the total lot area may be covered by a ground mounted Solar Energy System.

g) In the event that a ground mounted Solar Energy System has been abandoned (meaning not having been in operation for a period of one (1) year), it shall be removed by the property owner within six (6) months from the date of abandonment.

h) A building permit shall be required for installation of a ground mounted Solar Energy System.

**C. COMMERCIAL SOLAR ENERGY SYSTEMS.** Commercial Solar Energy Systems shall only be allowed in the **Agricultural** District or the **Industrial District** as a special use approved by the Planning Commission. In addition to any other requirements for special use approval, Commercial Solar Energy Systems shall be ground mounted and are subject to the following requirements:

1. The property owner or applicant for a Commercial Solar Energy System shall provide the Planning Commission with proof of ownership of the subject property, a copy of any lease agreement for a commercial solar energy system, together with an operations agreement, which shall set forth the operations parameters, the name and contact information of the certified operator, inspection protocol, emergency procedures and general safety documentation.

2. Commercial Solar Energy Systems shall be located on parcels of land no less than *twenty (20) acres in size.*
3. The Commercial Solar Energy System shall meet the minimum front, side and rear yard setbacks of the zoning district.
4. The height of the Commercial Solar Energy System and any mounts shall not exceed fifteen (15) feet when oriented at maximum tilt.
5. Landscaping shall be provided to screen the system from view on all sides to the greatest extent possible.
6. Prior to installation, the applicant shall submit a descriptive site plan to the Planning Commission which includes where and how the Commercial Solar Energy System will connect to the power grid.
7. No commercial solar energy system shall be installed until evidence has been given to the Planning Commission that the electric utility company has agreed to an interconnection with the electrical grid or a power purchase agreement. Any such agreement shall be furnished to the Planning Commission.
8. To ensure proper removal of a Commercial Solar Energy System upon discontinued use or abandonment, applications shall include a description of the financial security guaranteeing removal of the system which must be posted with the Township within fifteen (15) days after approval or before a construction permit is issued for the facility. The financial security shall be: 1) a cash bond; or 2) an irrevocable bank letter of credit or a performance bond, in a form approved by the Township. The amount of such guarantee shall be no less than the estimated cost of removal and may include a provision for inflationary cost adjustments. The estimate shall be prepared by the engineer for the applicant and shall be subject to approval by the Township.
9. If the owner of the facility or the property owner fails to remove or repair the defective or abandoned Commercial Solar Energy System, the Township, in addition to any other remedy under this Ordinance, may pursue legal action to abate the violation by seeking to remove the Solar Energy System and recover any and all costs, including attorney fees.

### **SECTION 3. VALIDITY AND SEVERABILITY.**

Should any portion of this Ordinance be found invalid for any reason, such holding shall not be construed as affecting the validity of the remaining portions of this Ordinance.

### **SECTION 4. REPEALER.**

All other ordinances inconsistent with the provisions of this Ordinance are hereby repealed but only to the extent necessary to give this Ordinance full force and effect.

**SECTION 5. EFFECTIVE DATE.**

This Ordinance shall be published and take effect seven days after publication as provided by law.

Approved this 17 day of May, 2017.

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