



Good Neighbor Practices Committee Statements

STATEMENT: Current ordinance property line setbacks of 50 feet are adequate to mitigate conflict between solar and land in agricultural use. Current ordinance property line setbacks of 50 feet are inadequate to mitigate conflict between solar and residential uses.

- The committee reviewed information on setbacks (to property lines and dwellings) from ordinances around the country. Linn County's conditional setbacks on already approved projects fell in the middle and in some cases at the upper end of adopted setbacks.
- The committee was split on whether the conditional setbacks of 300 feet to occupied dwellings are adequate to mitigate conflict between solar and residential uses and whether or not the measurement should be from the property line or the occupied dwelling.

STATEMENT: All projects should have a consistent baseline for screening requirements. Viewshed assessments should be utilized and specifications for how the assessment is performed should be spelled out. Viewshed baseline should be determined from residences.

- Ordinance should specify what must be included as a point of reference in viewshed study (possibly done by proximity and use type). Point of reference done on property or at road if access is not possible.
- Specify objective landscaping requirement that must be met unless agreement is reached with adjacent property owner.
- Viewshed study should be used to inform a site plan for screening and take into account planned viewshed changes from construction activities.

STATEMENT: Verification and enforcement methods for utility-scale solar project requirements (setbacks, sound, landscaping, viewshed, etc.) should be clearly spelled out in the ordinance. Enforcement methods should include an escalation process and utilize financial, legal, and suspension of operations to the extent allowed by Iowa law.

STATEMENT: Agrivoltaics such as grazing, pollinator plantings, and crop production under and around solar panels should not be considered as entirely separate from good neighbor practices like setbacks and screening. Agrivoltaic practices bring utility-scale solar projects more in line with the rural character of the area, helping to mitigate the dissimilarity between residential and utility-scale solar uses.



STATEMENT: Sound requirements for projects should include specific numerical standards for both construction and operation noise as well as time of day. There should be a verification process for these standards spelled out in the ordinance (see statement 3).

- Construction should be limited by time of day to mitigate noise concerns and possibly days per week.
- Noise should be measured at specific points (property line, dwelling, setback line, etc.).

STATEMENT: The ordinance should encourage cooperation between applicants and adjacent landowners.

- The committee feels the adjacent landowners in previously approved projects lacked leverage to have a seat at the table.
- A pre-application communication plan for properties within a specific distance to the project should be required.

STATEMENT: Utility-scale solar projects typically require a tradeoff between renewable energy production and agricultural production. The Board of Supervisors should consider if there is a “balancing point” in this tradeoff for Linn County.

STATEMENT: Linn County should proactively engage communities to routinely update strategic growth plans.

Good Neighbor Practices (GNP) Committee Research/Sources:

Solar/Landscaping Consultants Invited to Join the Committee Meetings:

Warren McKenna
Manager, Farmers Electric Cooperative
[Farmers Electric Coop](#)

Lucy Hershberger
Owner, Forever Green
[Forever Green](#)

- [Linn County’s current renewable energy overlay zoning ordinances.](#)
- [The Coggon Solar project staff report.](#)
- [The Duane Arnold Solar Phase I and Phase II projects staff report.](#)
- [The Linn County Core Values statement.](#)

- [The Linn County Comprehensive Plan.](#)
- [The Linn Clean Energy District Solar Fact Find Taskforce Recommendations.](#)
- [Setback analysis for the Coggon Solar Project.](#)
- [Setback analysis for the Duane Arnold Phase I project.](#)
- [Setback analysis for the Duane Arnold Phase II project.](#)
- [Landscape plan for the Coggon Solar project \(slide 48\).](#)
- [Landscape plan for the Duane Arnold Phase I project.](#)
- [Landscape plan for the Duane Arnold Phase II project.](#)
- [Link to National Renewable Energy Laboratory database on utility-scale solar setbacks from across the US.](#)
- [Indiana Renewable Energy Community Survey and Ordinance Inventory Summary](#)
- [Link to National Renewable Energy Laboratory database on utility-scale solar setbacks from across the US.](#)
- [Preliminary Monthly Electric Generator Inventory \(U.S. Energy Information Administration\)](#)
- [Yes, solar farms can produce noise!](#)

Research Requests:

- [Database of completed utility-scale solar projects viewable on Google Street View.](#)
- [Examples of different fence types used for utility-scale solar projects.](#)
- [Examples of flexible setbacks for utility-scale solar ordinances.](#)
- [Examples of sound and landscaping requirements for utility-scale solar projects.](#)
- [Database of setbacks for utility-scale solar projects.](#)