



## Athol Zoning Survey - Large Ground Mounted Commercial Solar Arrays

### 1. SURVEY OVERVIEW

The Athol Board of Planning and Community Development is in the process of updating the Town by-laws for large ground mounted commercial solar arrays throughout the Town of Athol to update the previous by-laws last revised in 2017 after initially being adopted in 2012.

Recently the citizens of Athol voted overwhelmingly for a short-term Moratorium on further development of this type of commercial solar array. This Moratorium does NOT affect residential roof-top solar installations, or installations on the Town-owned landfill property, or parking lot canopies (such as at the Market Basket plaza.).

This anonymous, voluntary survey will help us understand what the town's citizens want related to the expansion of these types of commercial solar arrays throughout the Town of Athol, and is being conducted for informational purposes only.

You are encouraged to leave your comments in the space provided for each question. Your comments are most welcome and will be extremely useful in understanding the concerns of the citizens of Athol.

Please fill out one survey per person.

We appreciate your assistance and time in completing this survey.

Thank you!

Athol Board of Planning and Community Development



## Athol Zoning Survey - Large Ground Mounted Commercial Solar Arrays

### 2. SECTION ONE

1. Do you agree with the Commonwealth of Massachusetts' desire to produce more electricity with renewable energy sources in an effort to reduce our reliance on fossil fuels?

- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Neither agree nor disagree

2. Of all the renewable resources available, which do you endorse for this area? [Select all that apply.]

- |                                      |  |
|--------------------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Solar Power | <input type="checkbox"/> All of the above  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Wind power  | <input type="checkbox"/> None of the above |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Hydropower  | <input type="checkbox"/> Not sure          |

3. Do you or your neighbors currently have rooftop or ground-mounted solar panels?

- ☐ You
- ☐ Neighbors
- ☐ Both
- ☐ Neither

4. Do you agree with the Town's current exemption of commercial solar projects on rooftops and parking lots from the site plan review permitting process?

- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Neither agree nor disagree



## Athol Zoning Survey - Large Ground Mounted Commercial Solar Arrays

### 3. SECTION TWO

5. Currently 78% of all land in Athol is zoned 'Residential C.'

Do you agree or disagree with allowing large ground-mounted commercial solar arrays to be sited in Residential C zoned areas?

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input type="radio"/> Disagree          | <input type="radio"/> Strongly agree             |
| <input type="radio"/> Strongly Disagree | <input type="radio"/> Neither agree nor disagree |
| <input type="radio"/> Agree             |  |

6. What are your major concerns, if any, in the placement of large ground-mounted commercial solar array developments in residentially zoned, forested, or scenic view areas? [Select all that apply.]

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Visually unsightful - Able to see them from roadways; loss of scenic vistas; ridgelines, etc. | <input type="checkbox"/> Clear cutting of forest land; loss of prime agricultural areas; effects on wetlands, streams and lakes. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Proximity to neighborhoods; effect on property values   | <input type="checkbox"/> Wildlife and environmental impact   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Runoff/Stormwater control   | <input type="checkbox"/> None of the above   |

Comments - Be as specific as possible

7. Given that Athol is primarily zoned Residential C - Do you approve or disapprove of clear cutting large areas of forest land specifically for the use of ground-mounted commercial solar arrays in residential neighborhoods, ridgelines and scenic view areas?

☐ Disapprove

☐ Strongly Agree

☐ Strongly Disapprove

☐ Neither approve nor disapprove

☐ Agree

Comments - Please be as specific as possible.

8. If a large-scale ground-mounted commercial solar installation was planned in your neighborhood, would you be concerned? If so, why?

☐ Concerned

☐ Not Concerned

Comments - Be as specific as possible.

9. What, if any, are your experiences with the development of large ground-mounted commercial solar array installations in Athol? (Select all that apply.)

- ☐ Abutter [Neighboring property]
- ☐ Property owner [of commercial solar project]
- ☐ Contractor/business owner [involved with development of commercial solar project(s)]
- ☐ Interested/Concerned Citizen
- ☐ All of the above
- ☐ None at all

Comments - Please be as specific as possible



## Athol Zoning Survey - Large Ground Mounted Commercial Solar Arrays

### 4. SECTION THREE

10. Are you familiar with the Commonwealth of Massachusetts's SMART (Solar Massachusetts Renewable Target) solar array development incentive credit program?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Somewhat

11. If Yes: Do you feel the SMART program has been effective in regulating how large ground mounted commercial solar arrays are sited?

- |                                      |   |
|--------------------------------------|---|
| <input type="radio"/> Agree          | <input type="radio"/> Strongly Disagree         |
| <input type="radio"/> Strongly Agree | <input type="radio"/> Neither Agree or Disagree |
| <input type="radio"/> Disagree       |   |

Comments - Be as specific as possible

12. What changes would you like to see to the solar siting process of such large commercial solar projects, both at the Town Zoning Level and the State Credit System - SMART program? (Choose all that apply.)

- ☐ Better zoning laws governing large ground-mounted commercial solar arrays, (especially in residential and scenic view areas.)
- ☐ Better communication with communities on both the local and state level
- ☐ More focus on developing "brownsites," parking lot canopies; existing commercial or industrial buildings, and municipal owned sites first.

Comments - Be as specific as possible

13. Should Athol's zoning encourage large ground-mounted commercial solar installations to focus on *already developed sites first*, rather than forested areas, ridge lines, scenic view sites, etc? [Select all that apply.]

Note:

*Developed sites are defined as: Existing commercial or industrial buildings; parking lot canopies, (such as the Market Basket Plaza parking area) as well various Town-owned properties, such as the old landfill; numerous defunct gravel pits, and other abandoned projects sites that could be repurposed.*

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Former gravel pits; landfills; previously developed sites, commercial or industrial buildings
- ☐ Parking lots; rooftops on commercial sites; town owned sites to be developed
- ☐ All of the above
- ☐ No opinion

Comment - Please be as specific as possible.

14. What do you think is the best way to address any concerns you may have in updating Athol's zoning by-laws related to such large scale ground-mounted commercial solar arrays? [Select all that apply.]

☐ No concerns

☐ Town management and the Board of Planning and Community Development to improve zoning by-laws

Your thoughts - Be as specific as possible

15. Based on your previous responses, what additional comments/opinions do you wish to share related to zoning of large ground-mounted commercial solar arrays in Athol?

☐ No further comment

☐ See comments below

Comments (Please be as specific as possible.)

16. About you [Optional]

Name

Company

Address

City/Town

State/Province

ZIP/Postal Code

Email Address

Phone Number