

VILLAGE OF HOMEWOOD



MEMORANDUM

DATE OF MEETING: August 10, 2023

To: Planning and Zoning Commission

From: Angela Mesaros, Director of Economic and Community Development

Topic: Case 23-23

APPLICATION INFORMATION

APPLICANT	Tony Jaswal, General Energy Corporation
ACTION REQUESTED	Special use permit for ground-mount solar system Variance from rear yard requirement Variance from the minimum setback
ADDRESS	1000 Maple Avenue
PIN	29-32-200-086, 29-32-200-085, 29-32-200-099, and 29-32-200-098

ZONING & LAND USE

SUBJECT PROPERTY	ZONING	LAND USE
CURRENT	M-1 Limited Manufacturing	Vacant land
PROPOSED	M-1 (no change)	Ground-mount solar system
SURROUNDING N:	M-1 Limited Manufacturing	Prairie Lakes Business Park
E:	M-1 Limited Manufacturing	Prairie Lakes Business Park
S:	M-1 Limited Manufacturing	Prairie Lakes Business Park
W:	M-1 Limited Manufacturing	Prairie Lakes Business Park

LEGAL NOTICE Legal notice was published in *Daily Southtown* on Friday, July 21, 2023 letters were sent to property owners and residents within 250’.

DOCUMENTS FOR REVIEW

Title	Pages	Prepared by	Date
Zoning Applications	8	Tony Jaswal, General Energy Corporation	06/02/23
Alta Survey	1	Langan	06/30/23
PV Module Plans	6	Terrasmart	07/03/23
Terrasmart Ground Mount Layout	1	General Energy Corporation	05/23/23
Landscape Plan	2	Langan	07/18/23

BACKGROUND

INX International Ink Co., located at 1000 Maple Avenue, has hired General Energy Corporation as a general contractor to construct a ground-mount solar system on two acres of vacant land adjacent to their industrial building. The solar system is projected to reduce its total energy usage by 66%. Their parent company Sakata INX is exploring all areas of green energy and has set targets to lower their company's GHG by 50% from their baseline year of 2005. The solar system commitment is for 25 years and will be owned by INX.

DISCUSSION

A ground-mount solar energy collection system on a one- to five-acre site is a special use in the M-1 Limited Manufacturing District. Special Uses are required for those uses that have a unique character that must be individually evaluated for potential impact on adjacent properties and the perceived public need for the particular use at the proposed location.

Section 44-04-14 (s) of the Village of Homewood Zoning Ordinance requires the following standards specific to (s) *Solar energy collection system ground, one-to-five-acre site*:

1. Ground-mounted solar energy collection systems shall be permitted in the rear setback only. The applicant has applied for a variance from this requirement. The proposed location is a separate lot that is technically the front yard for INX – no adequate space is available in the rear yard. The staff asked about the possibility of putting the solar system on the roof. The applicant stated that quotes for the roof were reviewed. However, there are a lot of openings on this roof which restricts the number of panels and causes a maintenance access issue. For this reason, they are only focusing on the open land.
2. The maximum height of ground-mounted solar energy collection systems shall be five feet in height, measured from the grade at the base of the pole to the highest edge of the system. The proposed height of the system is 5.7 feet. The applicant has applied for a variance from this requirement.
3. Minimum clearance between the lowest point of the system and the surface on which the system is mounted shall be 12 inches. The proposed system meets this requirement.
4. Ground-mounted solar energy collection systems shall be exempt from the impervious surface limits if the ground directly under the solar panel is plated with native plantings and ground cover. This is under review by the Village Arborist.
5. All parts of the freestanding system shall be set back five feet from the side and rear lot lines and shall not be located in a public utility easement. The proposed system meets this requirement.
6. Solar panels shall be screened from view from any public right-of-way unless otherwise approved by the director of economic and community development. As proposed, the screening is a five-foot high vinyl privacy fence. However, at the site plan review committee meeting, staff including the Police Chief expressed concerns about the safety of a privacy fence: if someone were to jump over it, the Police could not see them. According to the applicant, the issue with a taller fence (taller than 5ft) is that it would shadow the solar panels which will negatively impact solar energy production. But they are open to a metal decorative

fence with posts. For additional security, the fence and cameras would be tied to the current camera security system.

7. Information regarding the owner of the property and operator of the solar energy system shall be submitted to the village and updated with any change in the property owners or operators.
8. Decommissioning required. Any solar energy use that is not actively in use for 12 consecutive months the operator shall decommission the operator shall have six months to fully decommission the use, including all panels, structures, accessories, and appurtenances, shall be entirely removed from the lot.
9. Decommissioning plan. Prior to receiving approval, the applicant for any solar energy use shall submit a decommissioning plan to ensure that the project is properly decommissioned, which shall include:
 - a. Procedures for the removal of structures, debris, and cabling, including those below the soil surface;
 - b. Provisions for the restoration of the natural soil and vegetation;
 - c. A provision that the terms of the decommissioning plan shall be binding upon the owner or operator and any of their successors, assigns, or heirs.

The applicant has provided a decommissioning plan (attached).

STAFF COMMENTS

The Staff Site Plan Review Committee reviewed the plan with the following comments questions and comments related to the plan:

- The applicant confirmed that no additional infrastructure is required besides the solar equipment.
- The applicant confirmed that the panels are not motorized and will be fixed facing south around a 10deg tilt. Therefore, this will not provide any reflection or light pollution to the Izaak Walton Preserve to the north and east.
- Staff has asked the applicant to confirm in writing that an MWRD permit is not required for this project.
- Fire Chief asked how to shut the system down in an emergency. The applicant will install a main disconnect switch that can shut down the entire solar system's electrical supply. This switch will be located near a designated point on the site. The details will be included when they submit the final electrical plans.
- The project will not generate any additional property taxes. This was confirmed with Mohammed Elahi (Planning and Development) at the Cook County office.

FINDINGS OF FACT

The staff has prepared the **draft** findings of fact in accordance with the standards set forth in Section 44-07-12.D of the Zoning Ordinance Standards for a Variance. **The draft findings are provided for the convenience of the Commission. The Commission may make any changes to reflect the findings**

determined through the process of the hearing. The findings of fact, as proposed or as amended, may be entered into the record.

- The subject property is located at 1000 Maple Avenue;
- The property is owned by the INX International Ink Co;
- The property is zoned M-1 Limited Manufacturing;
- The applicant must abide by the standards in Section 44-04-14 (s) of the Village of Homewood Zoning Ordinance (with the exception of two variances: (1) & (2)); and
- The proposed use is compatible with the adjacent uses.

RECOMMENDED PLANNING & ZONING COMMISSION ACTION

The Planning and Zoning Commission may wish to consider the following motion, written in the affirmative:

Recommend approval of Case 23-23 granting (1) a special use for a ground-mount solar collection system on a 1 to 5-acre site; (2) a variance from Subsection 44-04-14(s)1 to locate in the front yard; and (3) a variance from Subsection 44-04-14(s)2 for a maximum height of 5.7 feet, INX International Ink Co. at 1000 Maple Avenue, subject to all other requirements of Section 44-04-14 (s) of the Village of Homewood Zoning Ordinance.

The Findings of Fact shall be included as part of the record and recommendation to the Village Board of Trustees.