

VILLAGE OF HOMEWOOD



BOARD AGENDA MEMORANDUM

DATE OF MEETING: August 22, 2023

To: Village President and Board of Trustees

Through: Napoleon Haney, Village Manager

From: Angela Mesaros, Director of Economic and Community Development

Topic: Special Use Permit and variances for a ground-mount solar system in M-1 Limited Manufacturing District at 1000 Maple Avenue



PURPOSE

INX International Ink Co., located at 1000 Maple Avenue, has contracted with General Energy Corporation to construct a ground-mount solar system on two acres (92,400 square feet) 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.

The Homewood Zoning Ordinance classifies a ground-mount solar energy collection system on a one to five acre site as a special use in the M-1 District to allow the Planning and Zoning Commission to evaluate each requested special use permit individually and to consider the impact of the proposed use on neighboring properties and the public need for the proposed use at the subject location.

PROCESS

On January 10, 2023, the Village adopted a new zoning ordinance that addressed sustainable design in developments, which included standards for solar energy collection systems. INX International Co. submitted a plan for a ground-mount solar system. The plan requires a site plan review. Section 44-04-14(s) of the Zoning Ordinance contains specific use standards for ground-mounted solar collection systems on one to five acre sites. The petitioner's plan complies with all of the standards except that it would be located next to the building instead of behind it as required by the ordinance, and the maximum height would be 5.7 feet which is 0.7 feet higher than the ordinance allows. The petitioner requested variances from the Zoning Ordinance to address these two issues.

The Staff Site Plan Review Committee reviewed the plan with the following recommendations related to the plan regarding additional infrastructure; non-motorized panels so that they do

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not provide any reflection or light pollution to the Izaak Walton Preserve to the north and east; MWRD review; emergency shut down; safety concerns with a security fence; and landscaping review. The staff comments are reflected in the conditions for approval.

On August 10, 2023, the Planning and Zoning Commission considered the request for a special use permit and the requested variances in a public hearing. Six commission members were present and voted four ayes to two nays to recommend approval of the special use permit and variances. The Commissioners who voted against the application expressed concern about the number of variances that were requested and the fact that no additional property taxes will be collected from the solar array.

Those in support applauded INX and stated that a solar field is a great idea and that the Village should encourage more sustainable efforts.

OUTCOME

The Planning and Zoning Commission reviewed the application, heard testimony by the applicant's representative, and considered the applicant's response to the Standards for a Special Use. The applicant's representative also addressed the requested variances. They said the solar field was proposed for the side lot since this is vacant land already owned by the petitioner, and 0.7' additional height (5.7' requested vs. 5.0' allowed) was required to provide 3' clearance below the panels for maintenance.

The following Findings of Fact were incorporated into the record:

1. The subject property is located at 1000 Maple Avenue;
2. The property is approximately 2 acres (92,400 square feet);
3. The property is owned by INX International Ink Co.;
4. The property is zoned M-1 Limited Manufacturing;
5. No additional infrastructure is required besides solar equipment;
6. The petition complies with all use standards except the proposed location and the height of the panels;
7. The proposed use is compatible with the adjacent uses;
8. The two variances requested would not impose a substantial hardship on neighboring properties and are unique to the applicant.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

- **Funding Source:** N/A
- **Budgeted Amount:** N/A
- **Cost:** N/A

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LEGAL REVIEW

Completed

RECOMMENDED BOARD ACTION

Approve an ordinance granting a Special Use Permit for Solar Energy Collection System, ground, one to five acres and Variations from Section 44-04-14(s) to locate within the front setback and to exceed the maximum height at 1000 Maple Avenue, subject to the following conditions:

1. 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 for location and height of the panels).
2. A Metropolitan Water Reclamation District (MWRD) review is required for this project;
3. The applicant shall erect a five-foot tall, open metal fence with posts and cameras that will be linked to the current camera system for security;
4. The applicant's decommissioning plan must include standards for structures that are below grade;
5. The panels cannot be motorized and must be fixed facing south around a 10-degree tilt to prevent reflection or light pollution to the Izaak Walton Preserve to the north and east; and
6. The applicant shall 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.

ATTACHMENT(S)

Ordinance