

Town of Manchester Planning Board Meeting Minutes

November 18, 2025 – 7:00pm

Present: Board Members Lee Sanders, Tammy Worden, Steve Buerman, Jefferey Flower, and Pauline DeCook; Chairman Scott VanAken; Code Enforcement Officer Marty Barnett; and Secretary Laurel Pitcher.

Absent: Board Member Christine Ciardi.

Also Present: Mike Mantell, Garry Reynolds, Tommy Swank, Mike Beckner, David Reed, Tayler Squires, Joe DeRuyter, Daryn Loy, and Jeff Graff.

Application #4671-25: Consider Site Plan/Special Use #4671-25 submitted by Manchester Solar NY LLC who is requesting to install a tier 3 solar array on property located at 3169 Co Rd 13, tax map no. 45.00-1-6.110 in an Ag district pursuant to Chapter 325 Section 325-40.33.

Chairman Scott VanAken began by reading the public hearing notice, then asked the applicants to give an overview of the project. Mike Mantell introduced himself along with Mike Beckner and Tommy Swank as representatives of the project. Mike Mantell said that the site plan approval they received in 2021 expired, so they wanted to reapply. He then went through some of the project specifications including acreage, land cover, and their plans to avoid an area that could be classified as wetlands in the future. Mr. Mantell said that they also updated the Decommissioning Plan to reflect current rates and prices. Mike Mantell also said that they are hoping to get a variance so they can make an Agricultural Mitigation Fund payment instead of doing an Agricultural Conservation Easement (ACE), which is a requirement of the Town of Manchester Zoning code. Board Member Jefferey Flower asked Mr. Mantell if any land would be designated for agriculture in the Town of Manchester, should that variance be granted. Mike Mantell said that they feel as though the Agricultural Mitigation Fund payment would satisfy that requirement without setting aside any land. Board Member Steve Buerman stated that the intent of that section of the zoning code is to preserve agricultural land within our area, and more specifically within the Town of Manchester. Chairman VanAken felt that the applicants' intended actions would not satisfy the code requirements.

Garry Reynolds said he was representing John Mueller and expressed some concerns. Mr. Reynolds asked the applicants why the project did not move forward previously when it was already approved. Mike Mantell said that there were many factors that contributed. He said this included Covid and the fact that the Planning Board felt that it had been too long since the original approval and wanted them to resubmit the application under the new zoning code. Gary Reynolds expressed concerns about property lines and boundaries, and Mike Mantell said that the application meets all setback requirements, so that should not be a problem. Mr. Reynolds asked what the expected timeline and date of completion are. Mr. Mantell said it depends on permitting, but they're hoping for 10-12 months.

Board Member Steve Buerman asked the applicants about the status of the interconnect agreement. He mentioned being surprised about how long the interconnect agreement has taken, especially when another solar project was started and completed after the original approval of this one. Mike Beckner responded that the process has changed since they started their original application. He briefly discussed some of the changes to the approval process and said he feels that the other project is likely a community solar project. Mike Beckner said community solar plugs into smaller lines and generally has a shorter process of about 12-18 months. Steve Buerman asked the applicants if they felt like they could 100% guarantee that they'll have the interconnect agreement within the next year, and Mike Beckner said yes. Board Member Tammy Worden asked if this is a new interconnect application or an existing one, and Mike Beckner said it's a new one from a few years ago. He said that regulations have changed, so they had to submit more recently. Tammy asked how many applications are ahead of Manchester Solar, and they didn't know. Mike Beckner said applications are approved in clusters, so it's hard to know exactly what that process will look like or how long it will take. It was noted that this interconnect application was submitted in September of 2024, which was during this project's second site plan extension period.

David Reed introduced himself and talked about risks with tier 3 solar panels. He said there are health risks and problems with poor construction materials. He's concerned about his property losing value and well water being contaminated. Mike Beckner clarified that the proposed panels are tier 1, but the size of

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the facility is proposed at tier 3. Steve Buerman noted that the language can be confusing and said that the types of panels and the facility size are both classified by a tiered system. He clarified with the applicants that the tier 3 classification is due to the project's size, but they're planning to use high quality tier 1 panels, and Mike Mantell said that's correct. They are not planning to use tier 3 quality solar panels in this project.

David Reed returned to his concerns about property value. Mike Beckner said he would provide studies showing no detriment to neighboring landowners. Chairman VanAken stated that the Town of Manchester Planning Board is not able to value properties or homes but agreed that submitting that study would be beneficial. David Reed reiterated concerns about his well water, and Mike Beckner also promised a study pertaining to that. David Reed expressed grievances with an unrelated local company. Another neighbor asked if they were to bring studies proving that nearby properties lose value because of solar farms, would there be any money put into a trust? He also asked about a guarantee that neighbors would be compensated, should their property values go down. Mike Beckner stated that he cannot give any property value guarantees, but he feels that this project will boost the local economy. A different neighbor stated that he likes trains and feels that trains are more exciting than solar panels.

A brief discussion was had about stormwater and drainage, and the applicants said there will be adequate drainage and no increase in stormwater due to this project. Mike Mantell said there will be some clearing where the solar panels are planned to be. David Reed was concerned about wildlife, especially because of the fence that will surround the solar field, but Mike Mantell said they will leave small areas of vegetation for animals.

David Reed expressed concerns about noise. Mike Mantell said the panels move very slowly, and there is no perceptible noise. Mike Beckner said they can provide a noise study as well. David Reed asked if the grass will be mowed and maintained, and Mike Beckner said it will.

The Planning Board took a moment to discuss next steps with this application, and they decided to send it to the Town of Manchester's engineering team, MRB, and lawyers for further review. They also decided to leave the Public Hearing open on this application. Attorney Jeff Graff mentioned that this application will need to be reviewed by the Ontario County Planning Board but said the Town of Manchester Planning Board should wait for a complete application before forwarding. With the public hearing being left open, this application will continue to be reviewed by the Town of Manchester Planning Board at future meetings.

Previous Minutes:

A motion was made by Lee Sanders to approve the September 16, 2025 meeting minutes. Motion seconded by Pauline DeCook. All voted "Aye." Motion carried.

Meeting ended at 8:10pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Scott VanAken
Chairman, Planning Board

Laurel Pitcher
Recording Secretary