

Resolution requiring the streamlining and improving of solar permitting in the Municipal Code.

## **RESOLUTION**

**WHEREAS**, solar energy benefits all residents of City of La Crosse by reducing harmful emissions and delivering reliable peak electricity when our grid needs it most. The permitting process in our municipality should be streamlined in recognition of the public benefits solar energy provides our community. Solar energy generates more jobs per Megawatt (MW) than any other energy technology. By making solar permitting simpler in our municipality, we will help the rooftop solar market in our municipality develop, bringing with it substantial economic development opportunities.

**WHEREAS**, streamlining the permitting process can also benefit the City of La Crosse staff by reducing the amount of time that must be spent answering questions and reviewing each application. As solar grows in popularity the permitting process runs the risk of overwhelming Municipality staff if it cannot be made more efficient. The improvements required in this administrative order can be implemented without compromising the safety and quality of the solar installations in the City of La Crosse.

**WHEREAS**, the purpose of this resolution is to promote the deployment of clean, local renewable energy in our municipality by removing unnecessary barriers to installing small-scale residential solar energy systems.

**NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED** information on permit fees, application requirements and process should be easily accessible the City's website so applicants can review and prepare materials in advance. The City shall provide a submittal checklist of all requirements for rooftop solar PV and solar thermal permitting in a single online location.

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** the City shall adopt an expedited permitting review process for residential solar systems that enables review over-the-counter or via electronic processing within one day. [The Solar ABC's Expedited Permit Process for PV Systems](#) provides a good example that can be adopted in full or used as a starting point. For larger systems not covered by the Expedited Permit guidelines, Building and Inspections shall set and adhere to standard permitting requirements to make the process clear and transparent. Building and Inspections shall work to make these standards consistent with neighboring jurisdictions.

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** the City shall adopt a system that enables submittal, review, and approval of residential solar system permits via email or a website.

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** the Building and Inspections Department shall offer a same-day 'over-the-counter' permit submission option. Travel to-and-from the Building and Inspections Department can be one of the most cost intensive parts of the permitting process for installers. Obtaining a PV permit should require no more than one visit to the building department for properly completed applications. If an over-the-counter option is not feasible, Building and Inspections should work towards turning around a permit in less than three days.

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** the City shall adopt a flat-fee solar permit of \$400 or less for residential solar systems.

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** the City shall accept North American Board Certified Energy Practitioners (NABCEP) PV installer and solar thermal certification, or already existing state licensing requirements, in lieu of community-specific solar licenses.

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** the Building and Inspections Department shall endeavor to make the average windows given for inspection appointments to two hours or less. Inspectors should be encouraged to call contractors as appointment time grows close to further save time.

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** the Building and Inspections Department shall eliminate reviews that do little to validate the safe and efficient operation of a proposed PV system. Only one initial inspection shall be required for standard rooftop systems on existing homes

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** the City shall train the Building and Inspection Department staff to review residential solar permits and perform standard fire department checks, as a way to reduce time and cost. The City shall make one or half-day workshops available to relevant staff. Trainings shall be available to both Building and Inspections and Planning and Development Departments.

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** this order shall take effect sixty (60) days after its adoption. Within fifteen (15) days of its adoption, this resolution shall be published at least once in a newspaper of general circulation published and circulated in the city of La Crosse.

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that the Building and Inspection Department, Planning and Development Department, City Clerk, and other agencies with solar permitting authority shall streamline the solar permitting process by updating provisions of chapters 15, 16, and 20 of the City of La Crosse Municipal Code related to residential photovoltaic (PV) and solar thermal system permit fees and take all steps necessary to effectuate this resolution.