

# Local Law Filing

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County  City  Town  Village  
(Select one:)

of Pittstown

Local Law No. 3 of the year 2016

A local law entitled Solar Energy System and Equipment Law  
(Insert Title)

Be it enacted by the Town Board of the  
(Name of Legislative Body)

County  City  Town  Village  
(Select one:)

of Pittstown as follows:

(If additional space is needed, attach pages the same size as this sheet, and number each.)

**LOCAL LAW #3-2016**  
**SOLAR ENERGY SYSTEM AND EQUIPMENT LAW**

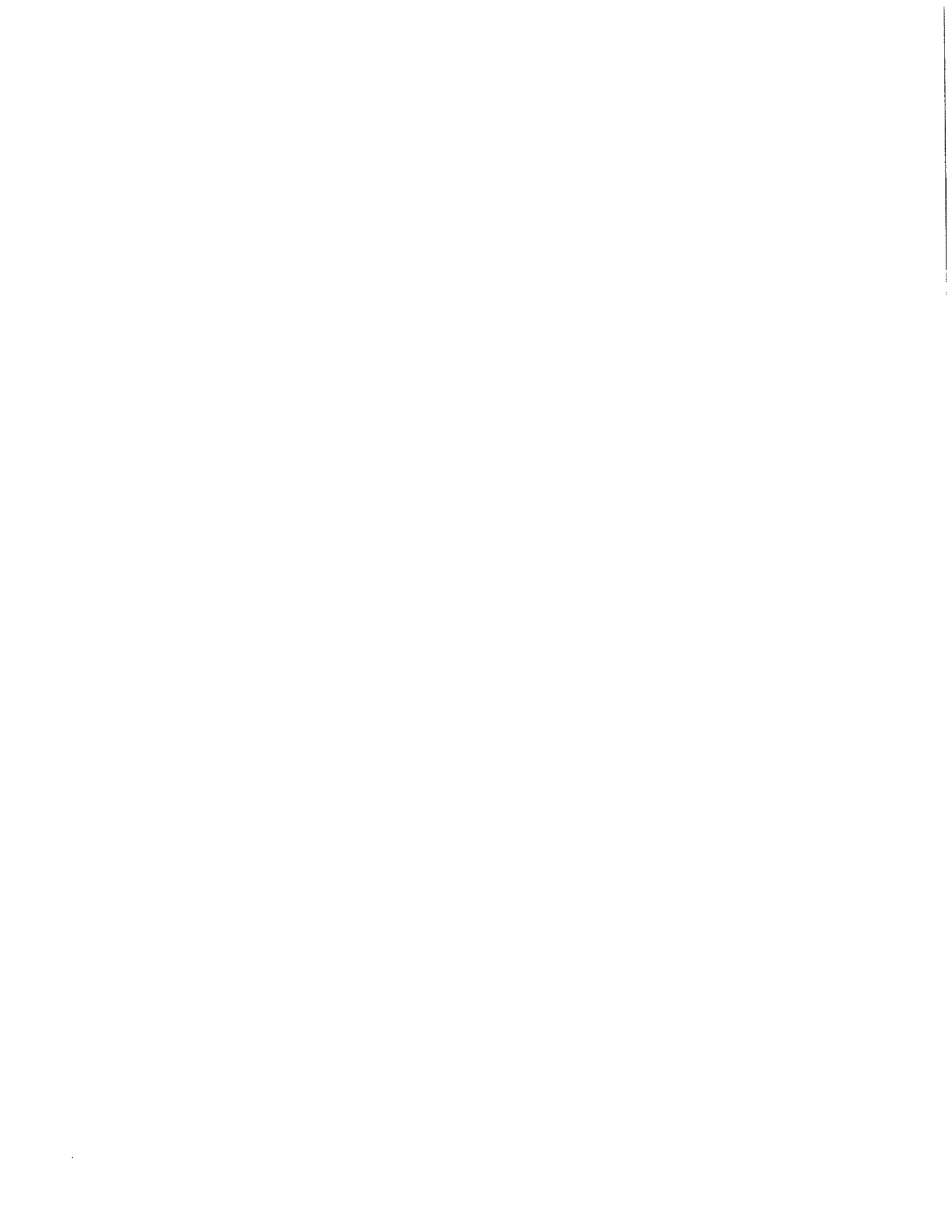
1. **Purpose and Intent.** Solar energy is a renewable and non-polluting energy resource that can prevent fossil fuel emissions and reduce a municipality's energy load. Energy generated from solar energy systems can be used to offset energy demand on the grid where excess solar power is generated. This Article aims to promote the accommodation of solar energy systems and equipment and the provision for adequate sunlight and convenience of access necessary therefor, and to balance the potential impact on neighbors when solar collectors may be installed near their property while preserving the rights of property owners to install solar energy systems without excess regulation. In particular, this law is intended to apply to free standing, ground mounted, or pole mounted solar energy system installations based upon certain placement.

2. **Applicability**

- (A) The requirements of this Article shall apply to all solar energy system and equipment installations modified or installed after the effective date of this local law.
- (B) Solar energy systems for which a valid building permit has been properly issued or for which installed has commenced prior to the effective date of this Article shall not be required to meet the requirements of this Article except in accordance with Section 5(D), (E) and (F).
- (C) All solar energy systems shall be designed, erected and installed in accordance with all applicable codes, regulations and standards as stated in the State Building Code and Town Code.
- (D) Solar collectors, unless part of a Solar Farm or Solar Power Plan, shall be permitted only to provide power for use by owners, lessees, tenants, residents, or other occupants of the premises on which they are erected, but nothing contained in this provision shall be construed to prohibit "collective solar" installations or the sale of excess power through a "net billing" or "net-metering" arrangement in accordance with New York Public Service Law Section 66-j or similar state or federal statute.

3. **Permit Required**

- (A) No Small Scale solar energy system or device shall be installed or operated in the Town except in compliance with this section.
- (B) The fees for all building permits required pursuant to this Local Law shall be paid at the time each building permit application is submitted in such reasonable amount as the Town Board may by resolution establish and amend from time to time.
- (C) Rooftop and Building-Mounted Solar Collectors. Rooftop and building mounted solar collectors are permitted in all zoning districts in the Town subject to the following conditions:
  - (1) Building permits shall be required for installation for all rooftop and building-mounted solar collectors, except, building permit shall not be required for Flush-Mounted Photovoltaic Panels.
  - (2) Rooftop and building-mounted solar collectors shall not exceed the maximum allowed height of the principal use in any zoning district.



(3) In order to ensure firefighter and other emergency responder safety, except in the case of accessor buildings under 1,000 square feet in area, there shall be a minimum perimeter area around the edge of the roof and structurally supported pathways to provide space on the roof for walking around all Rooftop and Building Mounted Solar Collectors. Additionally, installations shall provide for adequate access and spacing in order to:

- (i) Ensure access to the roof;
- (ii) Provide pathways to specific areas of the roof;
- (iii) Provide for smoke ventilation opportunity areas;
- (iv) Provide emergency egress from the roof; and
- (v) To further ensure firefighter access and firefighting considerations, there shall be no solar collectors placed as follows:
  - (A) Within two feet of the peak of the roof;
  - (B) Along the perimeter of the roof there shall be a space at least two feet wide as measured from the exterior wall (i.e. any eave or overhang is not included in the two foot distance); and
  - (C) Within three feet of any chimney, vent or similar structure that is connected to combustion equipment or a combustion source (i.e. fireplace, furnace, hot water heater, dryer and the like).

(4) Exceptions to the requirements in subsection (3) above may be requested where access, pathway or ventilation requirements are reduced due to:

- (i) Unique site specific limitations
- (ii) Alternative access opportunities (as from adjoining roofs)
- (iii) Ground level access to the roof area in questions;
- (iv) Other adequate ventilation opportunities when approved by the Code Enforcement Officer;
- (v) Adequate ventilation opportunities afforded by panel set back from other rooftop equipment;
- (vi) Automatic ventilation device; or
- (vii) New technology, methods, or other innovations that ensure adequate emergency responder access, pathways and ventilation opportunities.

(D) Building-Integrated Photovoltaic (BIPV) Systems: BIPV systems are permitted in all zoning districts and shall be shown on the plans submitted for the building permit application for the building containing the system.

(E) Ground-Mounted and Free Standing Solar Collectors: Ground-mounted and free standing solar collectors are permitted as accessory structures in all zoning districts subject to the following conditions:

- (1) Building permits are required for the installation of all ground-mounted solar collectors.
- (2) The location of the solar collector meets all applicable setback requirements for accessory structures in the zoning district in which it is located.

- (3) The height of the solar collector and any mounts shall not exceed 12 feet when oriented at maximum tilt.
- (4) Solar energy equipment shall be located in a manner to reasonably minimize view blockage for surrounding properties and shading of property to the north, while still providing adequate solar access for collectors.
- (5) Freestanding solar energy collectors shall be screened when possible and practicable through the use of architectural features, earth berms, landscaping, or other screening which will harmonize with the character of the property and surrounding area.
- (6) The area beneath ground mounted and freestanding solar collectors shall be included in calculating whether the lot meets maximum permitted Lot Building Coverage and Lot Surface Coverage Requirements for the applicable District, notwithstanding that the collectors are not "buildings".

(F) Solar-Thermal Systems: Solar-thermal systems are permitted in all zoning districts subject to the following conditions:

- (1) Building permits are required for the installation of all solar-thermal systems.
- (2) Ground mounted and free standing solar-thermal systems shall be subject to the same requirements set forth in subsection D above for Ground Mounted and Free Standing Solar Collectors.

(G) Solar-Thermal Systems: Solar-thermal systems are permitted in all zoning districts subject to the following condition:

- 1. Weight load;
- 2. Wind resistance; and
- 3. Ingress or egress in the event of fire or other emergency.

(H) Solar Collectors and related equipment shall be surfaced, designed and sited so as not to reflect glare onto adjacent properties and roadways.

#### 4. Safety

- (A) All solar collector installations must be performed by a qualified solar installer.
- (B) Prior to operation, electrical connections must be inspected by the Town Code Enforcement Officer and by an appropriate electrical inspection person or agency, as determined by the Town.
- (C) Any connection to the public utility grid must be inspected by the appropriate public utility.
- (D) Solar energy systems shall be maintained in good working order.
- (E) Rooftop and building-mounted solar collectors shall meet New York's Uniform Fire Prevention and Building Code standards.
- (F) If solar storage batteries are included as part of the solar collector system, they must be placed in a secure container or enclosure meeting the requirements of the New York State Building Code when in use and when no longer used shall be disposed of in accordance with the laws and regulations of Town and other applicable laws and regulations.

- (G) If a solar collector ceases to perform its originally intended function for more than 12 consecutive months, the system owner shall remove the collector, mount and associated equipment by no later than 90 days after the end of the twelve-month period.
5. **Performance Standards.** The Town Board in reviewing for a Solar Farm or Solar Power Plant with work with the Planning Board in conducting the Site Plan review shall observe the following performance standards as part of its review:
- (A) Solar farms and solar power plants shall be enclosed by perimeter fencing to restrict unauthorized access at a height of 7 feet.
  - (B) The manufacturer's or installer's identification and appropriate warning signage concerning voltage must be placed at the base of all pad-mounted transformers and substations and clearly visible.
  - (C) Solar Farm and solar power plant buildings and accessory structures shall, to the extent reasonably possible, use materials, colors, and textures that will blend the facility into the existing environment.
  - (D) Appropriate landscaping and/or screening materials shall be required to screen the solar farm or solar power plant and accessory structures from major roads and neighboring residences.
  - (E) The height of the solar panel arrays shall not exceed twelve (12) feet.
  - (F) Solar Farm and Solar Power Plant panels and equipment shall be surfaced, designed and sited so as not to reflect glare onto adjacent properties and roadways.
  - (G) Solar Farms and Solar Power Plants of less than 26 (kW) shall be on a parcel of not less than five (5) acres, otherwise a minimum of (10) acres parcel shall be required.
  - (H) All mechanical equipment on a Solar Farm, including any structure for batteries or storage cells, are completely enclosed by a minimum of 7' high fence with a self-locking gate.
  - (I) The total surface area of all ground-mounted and freestanding solar collectors, including solar voltaic cells, panels and arrays, shall not exceed 80% of the total parcel area.
  - (J) The installation of a vegetated perimeter buffer to provide year round screening of the system from adjacent properties.
  - (K) Because of neighborhood characteristics and topography, the Planning Board shall examine the proposed location on a case by case basis. Ensuring the potential impact to its residents, business or traffic are not a detriment.
  - (L) All onsite utility and transmission lines are, to the extent feasible, placed underground.
  - (M) The system is designed and situated to be compatible with the existing uses on adjacent and nearby properties.
  - (N) All solar energy system components shall have a 50 foot setback unless abutting residential uses. Whereby it shall be located a minimum of 200 feet from property lines. "Deviation from this minimum requires an Area Variance".
  - (O) Solar modular panels shall not contain hazardous materials.
  - (P) All appurtenant structures including but not limited to equipment shelters, storage facilities, transformers and substations shall be architecturally compatible with each other and shall be screened from view of persons not on the parcel.
  - (Q) Lighting of "solar farms" shall be consistent with State and Federal Laws.
  - (R) The following requirements shall be met for decommissioning:
    - (1) All applications for a solar farm shall be accompanied by a Decommission Plan to be implemented upon abandonment and/or in conjunction with removal of the facility. Prior to removal of the solar farm, a permit for removal activities shall be obtained from the Code Enforcement Department. The Decommission Plan shall include the following provisions:

- (A) The owner, operator, his successors in interest shall remove any ground-mounted solar collectors which have reached the end of their useful life or have been abandoned. The owner or operator shall physically remove the installation no more than 150 days after the date of discontinued operations. The owner or operator shall notify the Town Code Enforcement Officer by certified mail of the proposed date of discontinued operations and plans for removal.
- (B) Physical removal of all ground-mounted solar collectors, structures, equipment, security barriers and transmission lines from the site.
- (C) Disposal of all solid and hazardous waste in accordance with local, state and federal waste disposal regulations.
- (D) Stabilization or re-vegetation of the site as necessary to minimize erosion. The Planning Board may allow the owner or operator to leave landscaping or designated below-grade foundations in order to minimize erosion and disruption to vegetation.
- (E) Absent notice of a proposed date of decommissioning and written notice of extenuating circumstances, the solar farm shall be considered abandoned when it fails to operate for more than one year without the written consent of the Planning Board. If the owner or operator of the solar farm fails to remove the installation in accordance with the requirements of this section within 150 days of abandonment or the proposed date of decommissioning, the Town may enter the property and physically remove the installation.

**(S) Estimate and Financial Surety.**

In addition to the Decommissioning Plan, the applicant shall also provide an estimate, prepared by a qualified engineer, setting forth the costs associated with decommissioning the solar farm at issue. In the event the Planning Board grants a solar farm installation, it must also establish the amount of such surety to be established by the applicant prior to \_\_\_\_\_ (for example, building permit issuance). The surety may be in the form of escrowed funds, bonds or otherwise, but it is the intention of this provision to ensure that the Town has sufficient funds available to remove the installations and restore landscaping consistent with Section F above, in the vent the applicant fails to comply with its decommissioning obligations.

**(T) Definitions:**

**ALTERNATIVE ENERGY SYSTEMS:** Structures, equipment, devices or construction techniques used for the production of heat, light, cooling, electricity, or other forms of energy on site and may be attached to or separate from the principal structure.

**BUILDING-INTEGRATED PHOTOVOLTAIC (BIPV) SYSTEMS:** A solar energy system that consists of integrating photovoltaic modules into the building structure, such as the roof or the façade and which does not alter the relief of the roof.

**COLLECTIVE & COMMUNITY SOLAR:** Solar installations owned collectively through subdivision homeowner associations, college student groups, "adopt-a-solar-panel" programs, or other similar arrangements.

**FLUSH-MOUNTED SOLAR PANEL:** Photovoltaic panels and tiles that are installed flush to the surface of a roof which cannot be angled or raised.

**FREESTANDING OR GROUND-MOUNTED SOLAR ENERGY SYSTEM:** A solar energy system that is directly installed in the ground and is not attached or affixed to an existing structure.

**GLARE:** For purposes of solar siting, spillover of light beyond the property boundaries in a manner which either impairs vision or beams light onto adjoining properties or toward the sky.

**LIGHT TRESPASS:** The shining of light produced by a light fixture beyond the boundaries of the property on which it is located.

**NET-METERING:** A billing arrangement that allows solar customers to get credit for excess electricity that they generate and deliver back to the grid so that they only pay for their net electricity usage at the end of the month.

**NYISO (NEW YORK INDEPENDENT SYSTEM OPERATOR):** NYISO is a not-for-profit organization formed in 1998 as part of the restructuring of New York State's electric power industry. Its mission is to ensure the reliable, safe and efficient operation of the State's major transmission system and to administer an open, competitive and non-discriminatory wholesale market for electricity in New York State.

**PHOTOVOLTAIC (PV) SYSTEMS:** A solar energy system that produces electricity by the use of semiconductor devices, called photovoltaic cells that generate electricity whenever light strikes them.

**QUALIFIED SOLAR INSTALLER:** A person who has skills and knowledge related to the construction and operation of solar electrical equipment and installations and has received safety training on the hazards involved. Persons who are on the list of eligible photovoltaic installers maintained by the New York State Energy Research and Development Authority (NYSERDA), or who are certified as a solar installer by the North American Board of Certified Energy Practitioners (NABCEP), shall be deemed to be qualified solar installers for the purposes of this definition. Persons who are not on the NYSEDA's list of eligible installers or NABCEP's list of certified installers may be deemed to be qualified solar installers if the Town of Pittstown determines such persons have had adequate training to determine the degree and extent of the hazard and the personal protective equipment and job planning necessary to perform the installation safely. Such training shall include the proper use of special precautionary techniques and personal protective equipment, as well as the skills and techniques necessary to distinguish exposed energized parts from other parts of electrical equipment and to determine the nominal voltage of exposed live parts.

**ROOFTOP OR BUILDING MOUNTED SOLAR SYSTEM:** A solar power system in which solar panels are mounted on top of the structure of a roof either as a flush-mounted system or as modules fixed to frames which can be tilted toward the south at an optimal angle.

**SMALL-SCALE SOLAR:** For purposes of this Ordinance, the term "small-scale solar" refers to solar photovoltaic systems that produce up to twenty kilowatts (kW) per hour of energy or solar-thermal systems which serve the building to which they are attached, and do not provide energy for any other buildings.

**SOLAR ACCESS:** Space open to the sun and clear of overhangs or shade including the orientation of streets and lots to the sun so as to permit the use of active and/or passive solar energy systems on individual properties.

**SOLAR COLLECTOR:** A solar photovoltaic cell, panel, or array, or solar hot air or water collector device, which relies upon solar radiation as an energy source for the generation of electricity or transfer of stored heat.

**SOLAR EASEMENT:** An easement recorded pursuant to NY Real Property Tax Law Section 335-b, the purpose of which is to secure the right to receive sunlight across real property of another for continued access to sunlight necessary to operate a solar collector.

**SOLAR ENERGY EQUIPMENT/SYSTEM:** Solar collectors, energy storage devices, heat pumps, heat exchangers, and other materials, hardware or equipment necessary to process by which solar radiation is collected, converted into another form of energy, stored, protected from unnecessary dissipation and distributed. Solar Systems include solar thermal, photovoltaic and concentrated solar.

**SOLAR FARM OR SOLAR POWER PLANT:** Energy generation facility or area of land principally used to convert solar energy to electricity, whether by photovoltaics, concentrating solar thermal devices or various experimental solar technologies, with the primary purpose of wholesale or retail sale of electricity.



**SOLAR PANEL:** A device for the direct conversion of solar energy into electricity.

**SOLAR STORAGE BATTERY:** A device that stores energy from the sun and makes it available in an electrical form.

**SOLAR-THERMAL SYSTEMS:** Solar thermal systems directly heat water or other liquid using sunlight. The heated liquid is used for such purposes as space heating and cooling, domestic hot water, and heating pool water.

This Local Law shall take effect upon its adoption and filing with the Secretary of State in accordance with the provisions of Section 27 of the Municipal Home Rule Law.