



CITY OF APPLETON

MEMORANDUM

Date: April 22, 2026
To: Plan Commission
From: Colin Kafka, Principal Planner
Subject: Informational Presentation of Draft Municipal Code Text Amendments – Chapter 23 Zoning: Article III. Sec. 23-43 Accessory uses, buildings and structures - Solar Energy Systems

PURPOSE OF MUNICIPAL CODE TEXT AMENDMENTS

1. Establish a framework for the permitting of solar energy systems.
2. Provide clear and consistent regulations and standards for solar energy systems as recommended by *Plan Appleton*.
3. Ensure compliance with Wis. Stat. 66.0401 pertaining to solar energy systems.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Community Development Department Planning staff collaborated with the City Attorney's Office and the Inspections Division on the proposed draft Chapter 23 Zoning text amendments to establish clear and consistent regulations for solar energy systems in all zoning districts. This effort was initiated based on guidance from *Plan Appleton*, the City of Appleton's comprehensive plan, which includes policy direction for the administration and updating of land use codes. Specific direction was given in *Plan Appleton* to amend the zoning code to provide straightforward regulations and standards for solar energy systems:

Goal U | Utilities and Community Facilities

Desired Outcomes: More permits for accessory solar panels

Action: Amending zoning code for solar and anticipate new forms and types of distributed, renewable energy generation

In addition to the policy direction provided by *Plan Appleton*, the proposed text amendment will ensure zoning code compliance with Wis. Stat. 66.0401 which outlines the extent to which local governments may stipulate solar energy system regulations.

The proposed text amendments to Sec. 23-43. Accessory uses, buildings and structures – Solar Energy Systems:

- Provide clear definitions for terminology specific to solar energy systems
- Permit solar energy systems as an accessory use in all zoning districts

- Establish consistent development standards for setbacks, height, and lot coverage requirements as based on accessory building or structure development standards of the underlying zoning district.
- Outline the building plan review and approval process

The proposed text amendment will be added under subsection (g). The current subsection (g) *setback, height and lot coverage restrictions* will become subsection (h).

PROPOSED DRAFT TEXT AMENDMENTS

The text recommended to be added is underlined. The text recommended for deletion is identified by ~~strikethrough~~.

RECOMMENDATION

Based upon the above analysis, staff recommend the Plan Commission review the draft Municipal Code text amendments included in this report, discuss and receive public input on the proposed changes, and direct staff to make any revisions and prepare the necessary public hearing notices for the proposed text amendments to Chapter 23 Zoning.

NOTE: Chapter 23 Zoning text amendments initiated by Plan Commission will be processed in accordance with Section 23-65(c), Zoning Text Amendments. This process would include future review and action by Plan Commission (after public hearing), as well as review and action by Common Council.