



MASTER PLAN REPORT

Skunk Hill Road Solar
Development

Skunk Hill Road &
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Hopkinton, Rhode
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Skunk Hill Road Solar, LLC
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1. INTRODUCTION

Skunk Hill Road Solar, LLC (the Applicant) is proposing to install a solar photovoltaic (PV) and electrical interconnection system (the Project) on a site located off of Skunk Hill Road and Arcadia Road in Hopkinton, Rhode Island on parcels identified by the Town Assessor as Map 18 – Lots 8, 13, and 14 (the Site). The project parcels are located at 0 Arcadia Road, 0 Lisa Lane, and 145 Skunk Hill Road, respectively. In total, the parcels span approximately 169 acres.

This report and its appendices have been prepared in support of Major Land Development Master Plan Approval. The following sections describe existing conditions, proposed conditions, stormwater management, and conformance with applicable Town Regulations.

2. EXISTING SITE CONDITIONS

2.1 Site Information

The Site is located south of Skunk Hill Road, northwest of Arcadia Road, and northeast of Fairview Avenue. The Site is comprised of three parcels of land identified by the Town Assessor as Map 18, Lots 8, 13, and 14, which are owned by Gordon Excavation Inc., Donald G. Gordon, and Hopkinton Land 1, LLC, respectively. The project parcels are comprised of pasture, maintained lawn areas, wetlands, wooded areas, and existing trails as shown on the Aerial Map in Appendix A (Figure 3). The Site generally slopes to the east/southeast toward a southerly-flowing stream and associated wetlands along the eastern boundary of the site. The existing Site does not have any engineered stormwater best management practices (BMPs).

A topographic and comprehensive boundary survey for the project parcels has been completed, and a plan prepared by Cherenzia & Associates, LTD entitled Existing Conditions Plan, dated May 6, 2020 and revised November 20, 2020, is submitted under separate cover. The Existing Conditions Plan depicts existing site features including, but not limited to, topography, wetland boundaries, resource areas, and adjacent parcels. Supplemental information from Rhode Island Geographic Information System (RIGIS) is provided on a separate Existing Conditions Plan (Sheet C-101) provided in the design drawings in Appendix A, as described in detail in the following sections.

2.2 Zoning

The proposed project received Town Council approval in a decision adopted on June 10, 2019 (provided in Appendix K for reference, and hereby referred to as the Zone Change Decision and Conditions of Approval) to change the zoning district classifications for the project parcels from RFR-80 to Commercial with restriction to solar land use through Zoning Ordinance and Comprehensive Plan Future Land Use Map Amendments. Per District Use Regulations, photovoltaic solar energy systems are a permitted use within the Commercial District. The surrounding properties are located in the Rural, Farming, Residential Zone (RFR-80).

2.3 Existing Structures, Road Networks and Utilities

The three previously existing structures (a single-story residence, a barn, and a shed) depicted on the Site survey have been demolished. The existing road network around the Site is shown on the Vicinity Map (Sheet C-400 in the drawings in Appendix A).

Overhead electrical services are located from Skunk Hill Road along an existing gravel driveway on-site to the existing single-story residence, as well as from Arcadia Road along the southern property boundary. Additional residential utilities including septic and a private water supply well also served the structure. Refer to the existing conditions plans for all known existing site utilities.

2.4 Geology and Soils

The soils located within the project area vary, as shown on the Soils Map provided in Appendix A (Sheet C-402) and the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Natural Resources Conservation Services (NRCS) Web Soil Survey provided in Appendix E. Many rock outcrops were identified on the survey. Some areas of prime farmland and farmland of statewide importance are present on the project parcels, as shown on the USDA NRCS Farmland Classification Map in Appendix E; however, the majority of soils are not classified as prime farmland. No topsoil will be removed from the site and topsoil will be redistributed as little as possible. Land on the project parcels is not currently being used for agriculture purposes.

An on-site soil evaluation was conducted by a State of Rhode Island Licensed Soil Evaluator on December 22, 2020 to assess soil, ground water, and bedrock conditions in the vicinity of proposed stormwater ponds. A test pit location figure and test pit data from the on-site soil evaluation are provided in Appendix E.

2.5 Flood Zones

The proposed development is not located in an area of special flood hazard. The project area is located within Flood Zone X, which is an area deemed to be outside of the 0.2% annual chance floodplain, as shown on the FEMA Flood Insurance Rate Map provided in Appendix B of this Report.

2.6 Natural Resources

Wetland areas and streams have been delineated throughout the site utilizing field survey and supplementing with RIGIS data. Freshwater Wetland Delineation Reports prepared by Natural Resource Services, Inc. are provided in Appendix C. The survey, submitted under separate cover, depicts the wetland edges and perimeter buffer areas. Based on RIGIS data, there are no natural heritage areas within the project parcels. A portion of the project area appears to be located within a 250 to 500-acre unfragmented forest as shown on the Existing Conditions Plan (Sheet C-101). A Forest Assessment Report prepared by Land Management Services dated January 2, 2019 is provided in Appendix C. The stream adjacent to the project site is an unnamed tributary to Wood River and is listed as a coldwater fishery in RIDEM's Water Quality Regulations with a Waterbody ID Number of RI0008040R-16C.

2.7 Groundwater Aquifers & Wellhead Protection Areas

Based on the Hopkinton Groundwater and Wellhead Protection Areas Map, the northwestern portion of the site is located within a Wellhead Protection Area, and the majority of the site is located within the Primary Protection Zone as shown on the Existing Conditions Plan (Sheet C-101). The proposed solar facility is not anticipated to impact groundwater conditions.

2.8 Historic & Archeological Features

Based on available RIGIS data, there are no known archaeological or historic sites or features or cemeteries on the project parcels. There are several cemeteries within the vicinity of the project area as shown on the Existing Conditions Plan (Sheet C-101).

An archaeological study was performed by Public Archaeology Laboratory in February 2018 to review the project parcels and surrounding area for historic resources and archaeological sites. A copy of the archaeological study is provided in Appendix J. A letter will be sent to Rhode Island Historical Preservation & Heritage Commission to request review for any known areas of historical significance on or near the project area.

2.9 Open Space

No abutting properties are designated as Open Space areas.

2.10 Scenic Areas and Greenspace

Based on available RIGIS data, portions of the project parcels along Skunk Hill Road and Arcadia Road are located within scenic road corridors or state-designated scenic areas. The project parcels are not located within state, regional, or community greenways or greenspace priorities. A greenway was identified within the vicinity of the project area south of the project parcels. Scenic areas and greenways are shown on the Existing Conditions Plan (Sheet C-101).

2.11 Public Facilities

With the exception of two small schools located south of the site, there appear to be no significant public facilities within a one-half mile radius of the project area. The Vicinity Map, provided as Sheet C-400 in the design drawings in Appendix A, depicts the zoning districts of the project site and surrounding area in accordance with the Hopkinton and Richmond Zoning Maps.

3. PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

The proposed project consists of constructing a 20-megawatt (MW) AC solar photovoltaic and electrical interconnection system. The Applicant intends to combine the subject parcels, Map 18, Lots 8, 13, and 14, into a single parcel upon receipt of all necessary permits and approvals. As described herein, the proposed development has been designed to preserve the natural features of the site, to avoid areas of environmental sensitivity, and to minimize negative impacts and alterations of natural features, historic resources, and areas of scenic value to the maximum extent practicable. Proposed construction activities include:

- Site improvements including clearing, grading, revegetation, landscaping, and stormwater management;
- Installation of a stone access drive and security fencing; and
- Installation of solar panels, inverters, transformers, and an electrical interconnect system.

The Proposed Site Plan, provided in the design drawings in Appendix A (Sheet C-200), depicts proposed site features including, but not limited to, solar panels, inverters, transformers, access drive, and perimeter fence. The layout shown on the provided figure is a preliminary design, and the design will be refined throughout the development process. This figure also depicts setbacks outlined in the Zone Change Conditions of Approval. A landscaping plan prepared by The Gifford Design Group, Inc. of Cumberland, Rhode Island, bound separately, depicts proposed landscaping features including landscaped berms and screening per the Zone Change Conditions of Approval.

The proposed development results in approximately 0.3 acres or 0.2% impervious lot coverage. Existing woodland areas on the site will be cleared only as necessary to construct the infrastructure and avoid shading impacts on the panels. A Reforestation Plan, prepared by Land Management Services dated January 2, 2019, is provided in Appendix H.

As shown on the drawings in Appendix A, the proposed development will utilize existing perimeter woodland and wetland areas to provide a vegetated buffer between the proposed development and abutting properties in conjunction with proposed berms with landscape screening. Grades will be modified as necessary to provide suitable slopes in the panel area. Additionally, the area underneath the proposed solar panels and within the limits of proposed fencing will be landscaped by the planting of grass. Stormwater management will be provided for the proposed project in accordance with Town of Hopkinton and RIDEM standards, as demonstrated in Section 4.

No water, sanitary sewer, or gas services are proposed as part of this project. The existing water service and septic system associated with one of the demolished buildings will be abandoned in place. The proposed development does not anticipate the use of any additional public utilities or on-site sewer disposal due to the nature of the proposed use. Electrical connection and distribution cables will be underground to the maximum extent possible and allowable by National Grid and RIDEM. Electrical interconnection is proposed off Arcadia Road.

3.1.1 Development Impact Statement

The overarching purpose of the proposed project is to provide a renewable source of energy, with minimal impact to the surrounding environment. The proposed solar photovoltaic system is a passive use, with no noise, dust, odor, or other pollution or hazardous material concerns during the operation of the facility. Transformers used at PV installations are similar to the ones used throughout the electricity distribution system in cities and towns. Glare from the panels will be negligible since the panels are designed to absorb light as opposed to reflecting light. PV panels are made of tempered glass, pass hail tests and are regularly installed in areas of more extreme weather conditions. The proposed solar development is anticipated to be designed for wind speeds of approx. 110 MPH (gusts).

Existing freshwater wetlands, natural heritage areas, soils, vegetation, historic/archaeological areas, and groundwater resources have been described in previous sections. Impacts to natural resources have been avoided and minimized to the maximum extent practicable. As demonstrated in Section 4 Stormwater Management, the proposed stormwater

management systems will mitigate potential for sediment transport and erosion and maintain the quality and quantity of stormwater runoff.

The proposed solar development will not result in increased costs for municipal services (such as road maintenance, emergency response, solid waste, schools, and recreation) as demonstrated by the table below.

Table 3-1: Development Impact Statement Summary

Municipal	Impact Statement Summary
Roads	Traffic impacts are anticipated to be negligible upon completion of construction as vehicular trips will be limited to those needed for routine maintenance (anticipated to be quarterly frequency or less). Site access is provided via Arcadia Road and Skunk Hill Road. Site access, as well as internal circulation within the site, is shown on the drawings in Appendix A.
Fire and Police Department	The proposed development will not pose a significant fire or emergency response risk to the Town. The facility will be constructed of materials with low flammability. Power generation will be remotely monitored for any interruptions in the system, and the solar development company alerted to any interruptions in system. Hazardous materials will not be used in construction. In compliance with electrical codes, access to the site will be strictly limited to authorized personnel.
Solid Waste Program	After construction, the solar development will not generate any solid waste. Typical short-term waste may be generated by construction. Any construction debris will be disposed of in a manner consistent with applicable regulatory requirements and only at authorized disposal sites.
Schools	The proposed development will have no adverse impact on the school system.
Open Spaces and Recreation	Solar is a passive use and will not negatively impact the Town's Open Space or recreation programs. A substantial portion of the site will remain vegetated.

3.1.2 Permitting

A table is provide below summarizing the permits which are anticipated for the proposed development, as well as the permit status.

Table 3-2: Permitting Summary

Regulatory Agency	Permit/Approval	Current Status
Hopkinton Town Council	Zoning Ordinance and Comprehensive Plan Future Land Use Map Amendments	Zone Change Decision adopted 6/10/2019 with 20 Conditions of Approval.
Hopkinton Planning Board	Major Land Development Pre-application/Concept Review	Submitted 7/13/2020 and presented at 10/7/2020 Planning Board Meeting.
	Major Land Development Master Plan Review	Submitted herein.
	Major Land Development Preliminary Plan Review	To be submitted after Master Plan approval.
	Major Land Development Final Plan Review	To be submitted after Preliminary Plan approval.

Regulatory Agency	Permit/Approval	Current Status
RIDEM	Request for Preliminary Determination/RIPDES Construction General Permit NOI	To be submitted at a future date, anticipated winter 2021.
RIDOT	Physical Alteration Permit Application	To be submitted at a future date, anticipated winter 2021.
FAA	Notice of Proposed Construction or Alteration Form 74601-1	To be submitted at a future date, anticipated winter 2021.

4. STORMWATER MANAGEMENT

The preliminary stormwater narrative and calculations presented herein were performed to demonstrate compliance with the Town and State stormwater management standards in support of the project's application for Master Plan Review of a Major Land Development for the Town of Hopkinton.

4.1 Existing Conditions

The approximately 169-acre site is bounded by Skunk Hill Road to the north, Arcadia Road to the east, and wooded residential properties along the remaining property boundaries. As depicted on the drawings, existing ground cover in areas near the public roads are largely comprised of pasture and maintained lawn area, while the remainder of the site is comprised of wetlands, wooded areas, and existing trails; a driveway is also located on-site. The three buildings depicted on the survey have been demolished.

A topographic and comprehensive boundary survey of the site was prepared by Cherenzia & Associates, LTD, dated May 6, 2020, and revised November 20, 2020; a copy of the survey has been submitted under separate cover. The project parcels are currently vacant residential properties. The Site generally slopes to the east/southeast toward a southerly-flowing stream and associated wetlands along the eastern boundary of the site. The stream is an unnamed tributary to Wood River and is listed as a coldwater fishery in RIDEM's Water Quality Regulations with a Waterbody ID Number of RI0008040R-16C.

4.1.1 Pre-Development Drainage Areas

The pre-development site consists of nine drainage areas, which discharge to four study points. Stormwater runoff from these drainage areas is conveyed via overland flow to the site's wetlands (Study Points 1, 2, and 3), which ultimately discharge to the stream that flows off-site (Study Point 4). The existing drainage areas and the associated study points are illustrated on the Existing Conditions Watershed Figure provided in Appendix D.

4.2 Proposed Development

The proposed solar development will encompass approximately 51-acres (the area within the security fence) of the 169-acre site. The Site's three solar array areas are separated by wetlands. The project has been designed to avoid and minimize wetland disturbance to the maximum extent practicable. All proposed development will be located outside the 100-foot and 200-foot Riverfront Wetlands and 50-foot Perimeter Wetland areas. The proposed access road will utilize two existing wetland crossings for access between the arrays and through the site.

Post-development drainage runoff patterns will remain largely unchanged from existing conditions. Minor modifications will be made to the site grades and trees will be cleared to accommodate the installation of access roads, solar panels, and stormwater management features. Additional woodland areas will be cleared only as necessary to avoid shading impacts on the panels. The entire area beneath the panels will be revegetated.

The existing impervious driveways and buildings will be demolished and revegetated as part of the proposed work (approx. 0.8 acres or 0.5% of the site). The only new impervious areas will be associated with the concrete equipment pads (approx. 0.3 acres or 0.2% of the site). The proposed access road will be constructed of clean washed crushed stone in-lieu of gravel and is considered pervious. The proposed development will therefore result in a net decrease in impervious area.

4.2.1 Post-Development Drainage Areas

The proposed site consists of 14 subcatchment areas that discharge to the same four study points as the existing site. The proposed site will be comprised primarily of vegetated meadow area, with some areas of crushed stone and

concrete; the remaining portions of the site will remain as existing wooded and grassed areas. Runoff from portions of the proposed array areas will be conveyed via overland flow or via conveyance swales to proposed ponds, which will help mitigate peak runoff rates, prior to discharging from the site. The post-development subcatchments and the associated study points are illustrated on the Proposed Conditions Watershed Figure provided in Appendix D.

4.3 Stormwater Treatment

As previously described, the proposed development will result in a net decrease in impervious area. Therefore, stormwater quality treatment is not required for the proposed project.

4.4 Stormwater Quantity Analysis

A hydrologic analysis was performed to calculate and compare peak rates of runoff for the pre- and post-development conditions. The analysis was performed using the HydroCAD Stormwater Modeling System by HydroCAD Software Solutions, LLC. The HydroCAD model calculates peak rates of runoff based on various hydrologic parameters and the proposed stormwater measures. The hydrologic parameters that were utilized to perform these calculations are as follows:

- Design Events: The project was evaluated for the 1-, 10- and 100-year 24-hour SCS Type III Rainfall Events. Rainfall depths associated with each event were obtained from the Rhode Island Stormwater Design and Installation Standards Manual (RISDISM) for Washington County and are presented in Table 4-1:

Table 4-1: Rainfall Depths for Washington County, Rhode Island

Rainfall Event	Rainfall Depth (inches)
1-year	2.8
10-year	4.9
100-year	8.5

- Watershed Area: The watershed boundaries were delineated based on the pre- and post-development topography depicted in the drawings. The pre- and post-development watershed boundaries are illustrated on the Existing and Proposed Conditions Watershed Figures provided in Appendix D.
- Runoff Curve Numbers: Curve numbers have been computed using the TR-55 methodology and are included in the HydroCAD Reports. A weighted (composite) curve number has been computed for the site based on the amount of land cover and soil types. Curve numbers for the various types of land cover and soil types in each drainage area were selected based on the recommended values provided in HydroCAD. The U.S. Department of Agriculture Natural Resources Conservation Service Web Soil Survey maps were reviewed to determine the soil types present on the site. A copy of the soil map for the Site is provided in Appendix E.
- Time of concentration: The time of concentration was computed using sheet flow, shallow concentrated flow, and open channel flow methods. Time of concentration is a function of the slope, length, and surface roughness of the flow path. Pre- and post-development time of concentration flow paths are shown on Watershed Figures provided in Appendix D. HydroCAD calculations for the time of concentration for each drainage area are also provided in Appendix D.

Four ponds have been designed to hold and gradually release the peak rate of runoff for up to the 100-year storm event. These ponds have been designed to attenuate peak flows using a broad-crested weir, and in some cases a structure for outlet control. Hydrologic analyses of the ponds are presented in Appendix D.

An on-site soil evaluation was conducted by a State of Rhode Island Licensed Soil Evaluator on December 22, 2020 to assess soil, ground water and bedrock conditions in the vicinity of proposed stormwater ponds. A test pit location figure and test pit data from the on-site soil evaluation are provided in Appendix E.

4.4.1 Peak Rate of Runoff Comparison

Pre- and post-development peak rates of runoff were calculated and compared for the four study points as described above. Our analysis concludes that the post-development peak rate of runoff will not exceed the pre-development peak rate of runoff for the 1-, 10- and 100-year 24-hour storm events at any of the study points. A table summarizing the results of this analysis is provided below:

Table 4-2: Peak Rate of Runoff Comparison

DP	Peak Rate of Runoff (cfs)								
	1-year			10-year			100-year		
	Pre	Post	Δ	Pre	Post	Δ	Pre	Post	Δ
SP-1	1.2	0.9	-0.3	8.3	7.2	-1.1	26.1	23.4	-2.7
SP-2	16.3	14.2	-2.1	55.5	52.6	-2.9	137.7	136.4	-1.3
SP-3	17.1	15.9	-1.2	79.2	76.3	-2.9	232.2	225.3	-6.9
SP-4	17.2	16.0	-1.2	83.1	82.2	-0.9	267.4	266.0	-1.4

Copies of the HydroCAD Reports are provided in Appendix D.

5. DESIGN REVIEW GUIDELINES AND STANDARDS

The following sections describes standards listed in the Town of Hopkinton Land Development and Subdivision Regulations, Article XVI, as related to the proposed project.

Four General Principles of Design Review

- A. *The distinguishing original qualities of a building, structure or site and its environment shall be preserved.*

The existing site is described in Section 2 of this report. As described in Sections 2 and 3, the proposed development has been designed to avoid areas of environmental sensitivity and to minimize negative impacts and alterations of natural features and historic resources to the maximum extent practicable. In accordance with the Zone Change Decision and Conditions of Approval, landscape berms will be provided to minimize visual impacts.

- B. *The removal or alteration of any historic material, architectural features or trees shall not be allowed or altered unless the applicant can prove that it is more beneficial to the Town to demolish rather than save.*

Existing woodland areas on the site will be cleared only as necessary to construct the infrastructure and avoid shading impacts on the panels, as shown on the attached design drawings. A letter has been sent to Rhode Island Historical Preservation & Heritage Commission to request review for any known areas of historical significance on or near the project area.

- C. *Distinctive, justifiable, stylistic features and/or examples of skilled or period craftsmanship which characterize a building, structure or site shall be preserved.*

No buildings are proposed as part of the project. Vegetated berms will be constructed per the Zone Change Decision Conditions of Approval to provide screening for solar panels from Skunk Hill Road and abutting residential properties.

- D. *Contemporary design for alterations and additions to existing properties shall not be discouraged when such alterations and additions do not destroy significant historical, architectural or cultural material, and when such design is compatible with the surrounding environment.*

See response to Item C above.

Fourteen General Guidelines of Design Review

- A. *Height*

No buildings are proposed. Structures associated with the PSES will comply with height restrictions specified in Chapter 246 Non-Residential Photovoltaic Solar Energy System (PSES) Ordinance, as described in Section 5.3.

- B. *Proportions of Windows and Doors*

No buildings are proposed; therefore, this design guideline does not apply.

- C. *Relations of Building Masses and Spaces*

No buildings are proposed; therefore, this design guideline does not apply.

- D. *Roof Shape*

No buildings are proposed; therefore, this design guideline does not apply.

- E. *Scale*

No buildings are proposed; therefore, this design guideline does not apply.

F. Façade Line, Shape and Profile

No buildings are proposed; therefore, this design guideline does not apply.

G. Architectural Details

No buildings are proposed; therefore, this design guideline does not apply.

H. Advertising Features

No signage is anticipated for the proposed project.

I. Heritage – Historical/Cultural Impact

A letter will be sent to Rhode Island Historical Preservation & Heritage Commission to request review for any known areas of historical significance on or near the project area.

J. Energy Efficiency

No buildings are proposed. The overarching purpose of the proposed project is to provide a renewable source of energy with minimal impact on the surrounding environment.

K. Landscape

As shown on the drawings in Appendix A, the proposed development maintains significant existing perimeter woodland and wetland areas to provide a vegetated buffer between the proposed development and abutting properties. The area underneath the proposed solar panels and within the limits of proposed fencing will be landscaped by the planting of grass. Additionally, landscaped plantings are proposed on vegetated berms to provide screening of solar panels from adjacent residential properties per the Zone Change Decision and Conditions of Approval adopted on June 10, 2019. Refer to the Landscape Plan(s) for additional landscaping detail (prepared by The Gifford Design Group and submitted under separate cover).

L. Lighting and Controls

No exterior lighting is proposed; therefore, this design guideline does not apply.

M. Vehicular and Pedestrian Circulation

A security fence is proposed around the perimeter of the facility as shown on the design drawings. Due to electrical code restrictions, site access will be limited strictly to authorized personnel; therefore, this design guideline does not apply.

N. Environmental Impact

The proposed development includes alteration of more than five acres of land.