

# Energy company hosts virtual town hall

## 'Flat Run' solar farm on track for construction in 2023

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Carolina Solar Energy held a virtual meeting last week to answer questions from the public about its plan for a solar farm in Taylor County.

The company, based in Durham, North Carolina, has been negotiating with landowners in the county to secure the rights to roughly 450 acres of land five miles northwest of the city of Campbellsville, with the top-left corner of the development starting at the intersection of Saloma Road and Hobson Road and the top-right corner ending at a property line several hundred feet away from Old Lebanon Road.

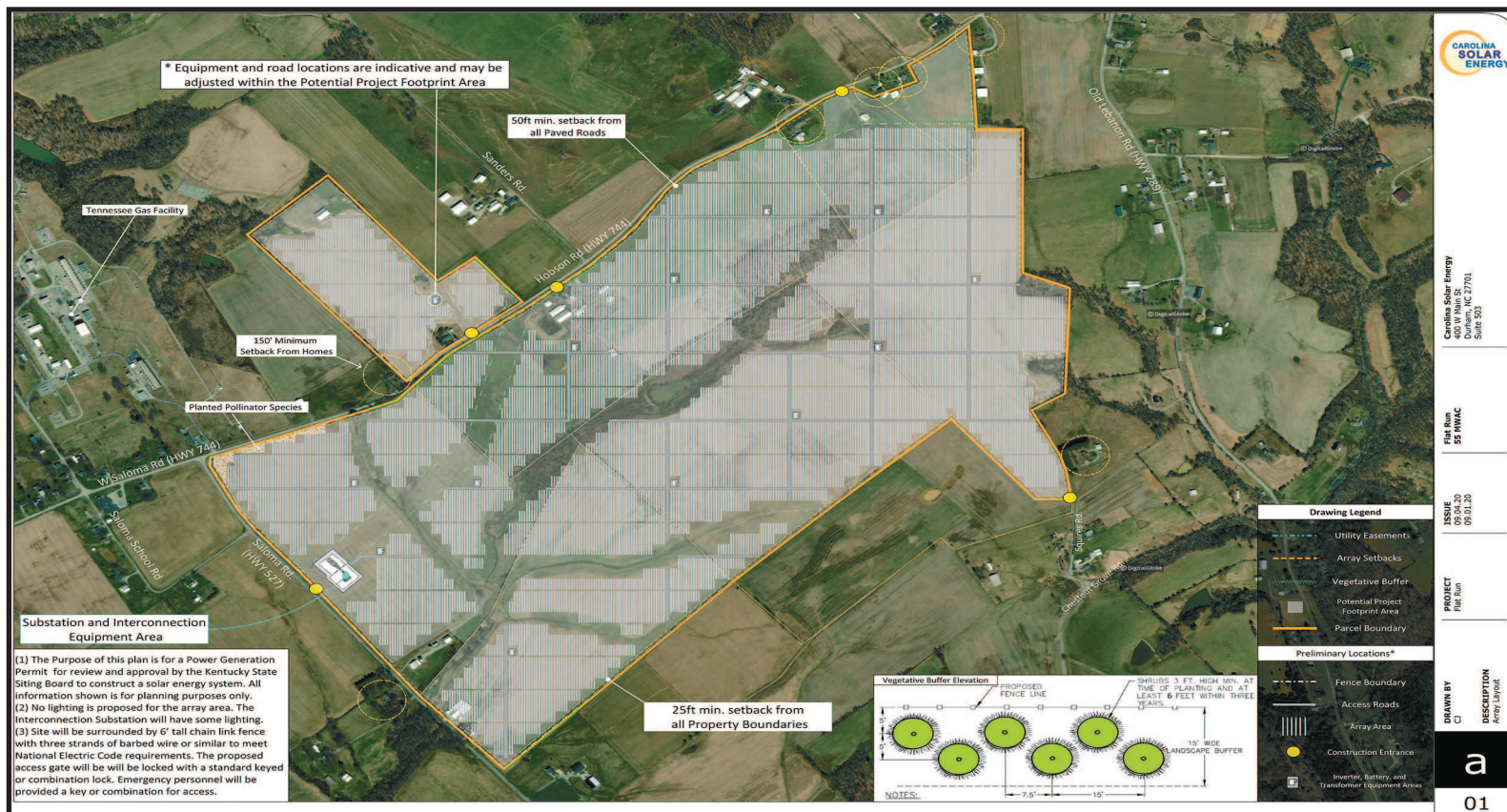
The company is calling the Taylor County development "Flat Run" because the majority of the land it intends to place the panels on is flat, which is ideal for solar energy production.

"We've been working on this project for a little over a year, and typically, around this stage of development, we would have a neighborhood dinner, where we would invite all of the neighbors and landowners adjacent to the project out to a local restaurant to get to know us, look over the site plans and ask questions," said Carson Harkrader, CEO of Carolina Solar Energy, during a pre-recorded video presentation played for attendees at the meeting's start. "But we aren't able to come to Kentucky right now, so we're making this video instead."

### Why Taylor County?

"The reason we are developing this project in Taylor County is that the East Kentucky Power Cooperative, which runs the transmission lines in this area, is part of what's known as the 'PJM Interconnection region,' which includes several other states like Virginia, Indiana and North Carolina," Harkrader explained.

EKPC is headquartered in Winchester, while PJM Interconnection, LLC, has its headquarters in Valley Forge, Pennsylvania, and has been in operation since 1927. It currently has more than a thousand member companies, including PPL Corpora-



(1) The Purpose of this plan is for a Power Generation Permit for review and approval by the Kentucky State Siting Board to construct a solar energy system. All information shown is for planning purposes only.

(2) No lighting is proposed for the array area. The Interconnection Substation will have some lighting.

(3) Site will be surrounded by 6' tall chain link fence with three strands of barbed wire or similar to meet National Electric Code requirements. The proposed access gate will be locked with a standard keyed or combination lock. Emergency personnel will be provided a key or combination for access.

(4) The purpose of this plan is to show the location of the solar array, utility easements, and setbacks from roads and property boundaries.

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tion, which owns Kentucky Utilities.

"Within the PJM Interconnection region, companies can buy and sell energy directly via private contract. There are many large businesses in this region, several on the Fortune 500, who have corporate mandates to procure renewable electricity to meet their company's electricity needs, and so those companies want to sign contracts directly with solar farms like this one to meet those corporate mandates."

PPL is among the many power companies seeking to reduce the greenhouse gas emissions that contribute to global climate change, with a corporate mandate to reduce its emissions by 80% by the year 2050.

While researchers and scientists are developing techniques for capturing emissions from fossil fuels like coal and natural gas in order to continue using them for power generation, renewable resources like sunlight are a safer, more reliable bet to reduce emissions in the short-term, meaning energy from solar farms is in high demand.

To be able to use energy from a solar farm, it has to be located in the region where the energy is going to be used, and it must be located near transmission lines that can carry the power. As such, Carolina Solar Energy has been in search of possible solar farm sites throughout the region, expanding its scope beyond North Carolina, where it currently has more than 40 solar farms in operation with two more planned.

The Flat Run project in Taylor County is just one of several solar farms the company intends to place in Kentucky.

The "Horseshoe Bend" project in Green County and the "Mount Olive Creek" project in Russell County are set to be completed in 2023, which is when Taylor County's solar farm is set to be completed, while "Glover Creek" and "Turkey Creek" are set to be completed in Summer Shade and Lancaster respectively in 2022.

### How will it work?

The stretch of land will have a 15-foot security fence surrounding the property, and within will sit rows of large solar panels which take in natural sunlight and convert it to electricity.

The panels are separated into clusters to allow maintenance workers to move through them, and are fastened onto racks that pivot to point towards the sun as it moves across the sky throughout the day in order to increase the amount of power they put out.

Once the solar panels have converted the light into electricity, it is delivered through wires to a piece of equipment called an inverter, which ensures the electricity being sent over local transmission lines is the proper voltage and converts it from direct current (DC) power to alternating current (AC) power, which is then used to power homes and businesses.

Several smaller inverter boxes will be installed near clusters of solar panels throughout the

acreage, and a substation will be located off of West Saloma Road so that utility workers can access it for maintenance purposes.

The panels are expected to generate 55 megawatts of energy per day, enough to power approximately 13,750 homes.

Carolina Solar Energy plans to maintain the solar farm until the panels reach their maximum lifespan of 40 years, at which point they intend to pack all of their equipment up, recycle as much of the spent solar panel materials as they can and then return the land to its prior use.

Chris Sandifer, a career electrical engineer from Duke Energy who now works with Carolina Solar Energy, stated during the video presentation that much of the material used in the solar panels could be recycled and the metal mounting racks would not harm the environment upon which they rest.

### Community impact

Aside from the benefits that come naturally from reducing carbon emissions, the main benefit of having a solar farm in Taylor County over the course of the next 40 years is property tax revenue.

Carolina Solar Energy will pay taxes on the property its solar panels sit on for as many years as the solar farm is still there, which directly benefits the county, especially the Taylor County School District and the Taylor County Sheriff's Office.

Harkrader stated that, typically, within the first

20 years of a solar farm's operation, it contributes a total of nearly \$1 million in property taxes to the county in which it is located.

In addition, the eight to 12 months of construction work has the potential to provide a hundred or so jobs to construction workers and sub-contractors, which they hope to be able to hire locally, and once the project is finished the company expects a handful of opportunities to be created for maintenance workers and landscapers.

"Obviously, it's better if workers are located in the community," said Harkrader. "Training is provided."

She also pointed out that any workers who come in from surrounding counties would be spending their money shopping, dining, renting hotel rooms and getting gas in Taylor County, which could prove to benefit local businesses.

Carolina Solar Energy also addressed some of the potential concerns that they've heard voiced from communities in the past. They company will be planting trees in key locations around the perimeter of the project area so that home owners should have less of an 'eyesore,' if that's something they're worried about, and they claim the noise is quiet enough and the nearby homes are far away enough that the sound should blend in with the usual background noise if it isn't too quiet to hear.

The company also hired Richard C. Kirkland Jr., of Kirkland Appraisals, LLC, head-

quartered in Raleigh, North Carolina, to review the impact of the solar farm on nearby property values. Kirkland is a certified general appraiser in the state of Kentucky who has studied the impact of solar farms on property values for several years, and he has found that there is no noticeable impact on home values when a solar farm is built adjacent to them.

He goes on to suggest that rather than having a negative impact on nearby residential properties, some homeowners actually prefer having a solar farm as their neighbor compared to other houses or a farm, which can generate noise from frequent traffic or loud occupants, create light pollution, kick up dust and, in some cases, result in odors, all of which are factors which could make a property less interesting to potential buyers.

Ultimately, Harkrader said her company's goal is to be a good neighbor, which is why they have spent the last year working with local stakeholders to get the project to a point where they felt confident discussing it publicly.

She encouraged anyone with questions or concerns to reach out to the company by leaving a message at 919-682-6822 — they're working from home due to COVID-19, but check their voicemail daily — or emailing info@carolinarsolarenergy.com.

A page on the company's website dedicated to the Flat Run project can be found online at bit.ly/3mJOet2.

# Durrett resigns as city engineer

## Former city employee recently appointed as LaRue County Judge-Executive by Gov. Beshear

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Blake Durrett, formerly Campbellsville's city engineer, was named judge-executive of LaRue County last week.

Josh Pedigo, director of public works, told the CKNJ in an interview that Durrett had actually left the city in a pretty good position — so much so that there are no immediate plans to fill this position.

"We had all of that stormwater stuff going on ... but that kind of dropped off when the city council passed that new ordinance a couple months ago, the one that made it so any project less than an acre doesn't have to have a permit to do the construction," Pedigo said.

That change decreased the city's workload dramatically, to the point there are only three or four construction projects left that need to work with the city to ensure their compliance with stormwater regulations.

"What we're looking for

is probably just a stormwater person. I don't know if we'll hire a city engineer, per se, maybe just someone part-time, or contracting it out as needed."

Campbellsville Municipal Water and Sewer already works with Monarch Engineering on relatively frequent projects like water line and sewer line extensions, which Pedigo says costs the city "pretty much nothing" because Monarch considers them "everyday things" given how little work goes into their planning.

Besides his work for the water company, Pedigo said Durrett had already completed all of the work he needed to do for planning the sports complex.

"That's pretty much a done deal; those guys out there know what they're supposed to finish and there's a deadline for them to finish by, so he would pretty much just go out there and make sure they were working."

Aside from designing and managing construction projects, Pedigo said Durrett's biggest job was

handling paperwork.

The sidewalk project currently underway on Lebanon Avenue was another thing Durrett had a hand in planning, but he left before he could file the paperwork necessary to prove the grant money the city used for the project was being used in a way that matches the terms of the grant.

Pedigo said that was hardly an issue, as he'd already been meaning to take over much of the routine paperwork that Durrett had to file to lessen his workload a little bit.

While the city may have a good handle on all of its projects so soon after his departure, Pedigo made it clear that was in large part thanks to all of the heavy lifting Durrett had already done.

One big example that stuck out to Pedigo was when the water company started installing flow monitors to keep track of water pressure in Miller Park.

Durrett was assisting them with finding trends in the data, and there was a ton to go through.

"You have 30 days' worth of numbers collected over the course of 24 hours in a day, and it's

a lot to decipher, but then we went with Wauford Engineering and they got sent all of the data that he'd helped with at that point," Pedigo said.

"He was a big asset to the city, and he helped out a lot. I'm not an engineer, so I don't know some of the stuff he knew, but he would answer any of the ques-

tions I or anyone else would bring him. It was a surprise to find out he was leaving, but I'm happy for him, I hope it works out for him and he's definitely missed."

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