Introduction

The Southwind Shores POA recognizes that there is likely to be POA member interest in installing solar paneled power systems. Since these systems by nature must be installed external to the home, the POA has developed this policy to aid members (homeowners) in developing their solar projects within POA expectations, thereby minimizing the time for project review and approval by the Environmental Committee and/or the POA Board of Directors. Per existing by-laws, all solar installations must be approved by the Environmental Committee Chair and/or Board of Directors prior to work beginning.
The Board of Directors recognizes the benefits of renewable energy sources, including solar, to overall energy programs within our society, and is committed to working effectively with owners proposing solar power projects. So the Board has voted to adopt the Policy and Guidelines below which are effective immediately, apply to any pending applications, and are to remain in effect subject to reconsideration by the Board after the POA Owners can be heard on October 22nd, 2022 on what if any policy is to be made to address solar energy collection devices, including solar panels, as defined in the Code of Virginia Section 55.1-1820.1.

Policy and Guidelines

Based on the Code of Virginia Section 55.1-1820.1, Installation of Solar Energy Collection Devices, the SWS II POA has established the following policy elements regarding the installation of residential solar power systems:

1) Preferred location of solar panels is a side- or rear-facing roof-mounted array. Roof solar panels should be as flat to the roof as possible (i.e. flush mounted parallel to roof surface).

2) Piping and electrical connections will be located directly under and/or within the perimeter of the panels, when possible, and placed as inconspicuously as possible when viewed from all angles. Color of connections should match color of panels/roof to maximum extent possible.

3) The highest point of a solar panel array will be lower than the ridge of the roof where it is attached. Note: new Spotsylvania building codes require a 3’ clearance from roof ridge and sides of roof.

4) Changes to adjacent property should not impede an existing or soon-to-be-installed solar system or interfere with any existing solar energy easement.

5) Due to the nature of the lake for views and recreation, ground mounted solar arrays are highly discouraged, especially on lake front lots. Roof mounted arrays on the front (street facing) of houses is by far the preferred alternative over ground mounted systems. Ground mounted systems may be allowed to the extent that: 1) there is sufficient space that they are minimally visible from the street (such as backs of Lots 27-38), as well as minimally visible to neighbors and their views of the lake; 2) property and building are such that a ground mounted system is the only viable alternative for collection of energy; 3) the array does not impose a safety hazard to neighbors and children; 4) the array does not form a visual barricade for neighbor’s views of the lake; and 5) documentation compliant with Section 55.1-1820.1 has been provided that says this is the only feasible location for a solar array.

6) Size of solar system should not exceed current net metering code limitations.

7) Design and placement must meet current Virginia and Spotsylvania County building code requirements. Homeowners must provide a copy of approved county permits once available.

A variance to certain sections of these guidelines may be granted if compliance with these guidelines would significantly increase the purchase price of the solar system or significantly decrease its efficiency per Code of Virginia Section 55.1-1820.1. If a homeowner seeks a variance, they must provide documentation compliant with Section 55.1-1820.1 which currently is documentation prepared by an independent solar panel design specialist, who is certified by the North American Board of Certified Energy Practitioners and is licensed in Virginia that says a restriction above from which a variance is sought either (i) increases the cost of installation of the solar energy collection device by five percent over the projected cost of the initially proposed installation or (ii) reduces the energy production by the solar energy collection device by 10 percent below the projected energy production of the initially proposed installation.