



LUP Hearings <lup-hearings@multco.us>

Oct 4 2021 Multnomah County Planning Commission Meeting

Wed, Oct 6, 2021 at 3:01 PM

To: lup-hearings@multco.us



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I listened in on the virtual meeting. I am very interested in filing a public comment on the problems with installing solar panels in Multnomah Count and the "full land use" review it triggers.

No one should have to go through the problems I did simply to install solar panels with battery backup.

Please provide the procedure and guidelines for filing such a public comment.

Regards,

Gary Hufton

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Amending MC Codes for Residential Solar Roof Installation, a non-agenda item discussed at the Planning Commission Meeting held 4 October 2021

Commissioners,

On 10 October 2019 we signed a contract for the installation of solar panels, with battery back-up. The plan was to have the system up and running before the end of the year to claim the 30% Federal tax credit.

The installation was finally completed, and the system went live on 30 July 2020. This was allowed only after every county department in the review process had signed off or agreed that any open items would not be affected by the installation.

The final “full land use review” was completed on 11 October 2020 with the approval of a Road Rules Variance.

If we knew what we know now, we probably never would not have started the project.

Some recommendations that might be considered, to prevent this from happening to anyone else:

- 1) The installation of solar panels should not initiate a full land use review. Solar panels should be permitted using the same process as any other major home upgrade, for example adding a hybrid water heater, or high efficiency heat pump. Both of which we had installed later, with absolutely no issues or delays.
- 2) If this is not possible, then both the contractor and the home should be informed from the beginning that the permitting process will take months. ***Most importantly, the homeowner should be informed exactly what is involved and that most the burden will be on the homeowner, not the contractor.*** The contractor can only take responsibility for what they are doing on the property, not a full land use review of the property.
- 3) Since most of the burden for a full land use review will be on the homeowner, this process should be streamlined and simplified.
 - a. The homeowner should not be asked to fill out and understand forms aimed at the typical contractor.
 - b. The homeowner should not be asked to supply copies of documents that the county should already have, for example, the current property Title or the original Lot of Record.
 - c. For those homeowners who reside in rural areas, with lots of potential legacy issues, an expediated way to quickly review and approve existing conditions should be available. In our case, the Transportation Department found our looped driveway to be in violation of the Right of Way rules. This configuration has been in use for over 100 years, probably before Loudon Road was an even a county road or paved. We had to submit a formal application for a variance to get the existing configuration approved.

Lastly, the installation of a battery back-up system along with solar panels is becoming increasingly common. During any discussion by the Planning Commission to expedite the approval of solar panels, the expeditious approval of battery back-up systems should also be included.

Respectfully,

Gary and Marth Hufton

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