

MEMO

RE: Determination, solar power system as an allowable accessory use

Date: July 2, 2019

From: Paul Patterson, Zoning Administrator 

A solar power system directly attached to a house or commercial building in a substantial manner is considered to be part of the principal building and would generally be a permitted use by right. (Zoning Ordinance, Section 2103 Definitions – Accessory building or structure).

A solar power system separated from a house or commercial building, such as being located in the yard, would be considered to be an accessory structure and would need to meet the Use and Design Standards of an accessory structure (Zoning Ordinance, Section 4703).

REQUIRED PERMITS

An electrical permit approval from the Town of Blacksburg's Building Division is required prior to the installation of any solar power system.

In addition, a zoning permit approval from the Town of Blacksburg's Planning Division is required for any solar power system that is not directly attached to the principal building in a substantial manner, such as being located on the roof. The zoning permit application would need to show the location of the solar power system on the lot with distances from other lot structures, required yard setbacks, distances to the property line, and the overall impervious surface lot coverage ratio for the lot.

LOCATION IF NOT DIRECTLY ATTACHED TO THE PRINCIPAL BUILDING

In the residential zoning districts, an accessory structure is required to be located behind the front building line of the principal structure (residential dwelling). This provision does not apply to agriculture structures devoted to an agriculture use, located within the RR1 or RR2 zoning district.

The setback requirements of the underlying zoning district need to be met. However, if the accessory structure is not located in a yard adjacent to a public right-of-way, and is twelve (12) feet or less in height and is two hundred (200) square feet or less in area, the minimum setbacks are: side yard – five (5) feet; rear yard – five (5) feet.