

Memo to: County Commission

From: Douglas County Food Policy Council

Subject: Memo in regard to draft standards for Commercial/Utility Scale Solar Energy Conversion Systems (CSECS)

Date: March 14, 2022



On behalf of the Douglas Co Food Policy Council, I first want to express our appreciation of the Planning Commission’s ad hoc committee for inviting our Council to consult on the standards last fall and for listening to our priorities and concerns.

The Council utilizes the Douglas County Food System Plan (FSP) as its chief guiding document. The regulations presented for your consideration certainly align with some of the goals and objectives in the plan, including those aimed to “protect high quality agricultural lands” (*Goal 2, Objective 1*). For the standards to allow and by some degree encouraging projects co-locate agricultural operations into solar energy production site plans, also known as Agrivoltaics, we will begin to build a network of landowners, solar contractors, and aspiring farmers seeking access to land. This is supported in the FSPs effort to “establish tools to protect High Quality Agricultural Land for farming that are economically feasible for the land-owner” (*Goal 2, Objective 1, Policy 3*). It is vital to allow land-owners the freedom to diversify their income stream, and potentially increase job creation and food production for our County. It will also ensure the viability of prime soils for agricultural use throughout the life of the project.

The Douglas County Food Policy Council supports solar energy production as a part of the transition to clean and renewable energy yet urges the Commissioners to adopt policy that aligns with the existing Food System Plan. We support regulations and standards that encourage large-scale solar projects to incorporate land management practices that minimally disturb high quality soils while maintaining or increasing soil health, manage brush in an environmentally conscious manner such as utilizing grazing livestock, and are able to co-exist with a variety of agricultural production methods thus providing additional economic development opportunities for land-owners.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "T. Lindquist".

Tyler J. Lindquist
Chair, Douglas County Food Policy Council