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# MEMORANDUM

**To:** Historic Resources Commission

**From:** Jennifer Pruitt, Principal Planner

**Date:** July 08, 2010

**Subject:** HRC-10-020  
Renewable Energy Discussion

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**F-1**

### DISCUSSION:

This is a discussion only item, to evaluate the possibility of the Historic Resources Commission creating standards associated with Renewable Energy Projects in the Historic District. Staff has assembled a packet of information that includes information related to solar panel installation and historic districts.

Dennis and Leslie Medeiros, owners of the Solar Store in Carson City, will address the commission and provide information related to the solar panel industry. The Solar Store's mission is to develop sustainable resources that future generations can rely on without creating long term damage to the environment, climate and living habitats.

**FrederickNewsPost.com****How to go green in the historic district****Possibilities abound in city's downtown area**

Originally published February 19, 2008

**By Adam Behsudi**

An overhanging roof, thick stone walls, wood-framed windows and log construction.

The original builders of Frederick's historic district buildings never knew the features of their houses would become part of a new design trend.

However, enhancing a home in the historic district with modern "green" or environmental features takes some innovation when facing approval from the city's Historic Preservation Commission.

Despite Frederick's historic buildings never being intended as green structures, many of their most common features already increase efficiency, city historic planner Emily Paulus said.

Adding green features to the exterior of a historic house is subject to approval by the preservation commission, but is encouraged so long as the features don't detract from the historical character of the building, Paulus said.

"I don't know (if) it can be argued that a modern building is going to be more energy efficient than a historic building," she said.

With most structures in the historic district built before air conditioning and heating, they were made to maximize heat and light, Paulus said.

Thick masonry walls and natural building materials retain heat and cold more efficiently, she said.

The city must approve any major changes on the exterior of a building in the designated historic district. That includes the type of materials used.

Many property owners look at vinyl-framed windows as an efficient alternative to wood-framed windows. Paulus said those newer windows are discouraged since original windows are an important part of a building's historic character and usually are not the biggest culprit in heat loss.

"Most heat loss occurs through the attic," Paulus said. That can be fixed with insulation.

Solar panels, what many think of first when envisioning environmental technologies, are allowed on historic buildings.

Paulus said the installation of solar panels likely would be approved by the commission if the panels are proposed for a section of roof not visible from a street.

She said she did not know of any historic district property owners who have installed solar panels.

"The commission is very accommodating in retrofitting or adding those technologies to the buildings as long as they don't cause any damage or remove any original features," she said.



*Photo by Doug Koontz*

Architect Gary Baker looks over the Cannon Hill office building he designed to be green, reusing items like stone found on the lot.

Some state lawmakers are working to guarantee the rights of homeowners to install such panels in historic districts and other neighborhoods.

Delegate Karen Montgomery introduced a bill that would prohibit policies banning them from historic buildings and condominiums.

"It is my firm belief that with sensitivity and good placement, almost every property can accommodate solar panels," said the Montgomery County Democrat who lives in a historic home in Brookeville.

Montgomery's house Bill 71 would allow a local preservation board to regulate size, color and location of a solar panel but not prohibit its installation.

Frederick Delegate Sue Hecht has introduced a energy bill prohibiting homeowners associations from restricting solar panel installation.

Her bill did not apply to historic properties, but Hecht, a Democrat, said she wasn't "for or against" addressing the installation of solar panels on historic buildings.

"We want to encourage renewable energy," she said. "These systems are not ugly."

### **Creative reuse**

Ken Anderer, a member of the historic preservation commission, said most "green" practices can be applied to a historic property.

"Sometimes it takes some innovation to incorporate those factors," said Anderer, an engineer accredited under the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design Green Building Rating System.

The LEED certification system rates buildings on their energy and environmental efficiency and impact.

Anderer said he doesn't know of a LEED certified building in Frederick's historic district, but didn't say it could not be done.

"It would take a good bit of imagination and effort to fulfill enough of the criteria," he said.

The interior of any house in the historic district does not fall under the scrutiny of the preservation commission. Owners would be allowed to install water-saving fixtures, highly efficient heating and cooling systems or sustainable flooring.

Reuse and restoration of a building, if done right, is an inherent green practice, he said.

"One of the criteria in the LEED certification is the reuse of buildings," Anderer said. "That certainly is a basic tenet off the LEED program."

### **Green equals good design**

When designing the Cannon Hill Office Building on East South Street, architect Gary D. Baker used recycled materials and built-in features that would add efficiency.

The building is new but could easily be passed over as an existing structure that had been renovated.

Stones from the site and a local abandoned house were used to build a base wall. Brick was brought in from Hagerstown.

Inside, floors and support beams were crafted from lumber taken from an old warehouse in Woodsboro, Pa.

Using local and recycled material, Baker said, was cheaper and more efficient.

The building and its features were welcomed by the city's preservation commission, he said.

"The good thing about the historic district is they like you to use as much real material as possible," Baker said.

A clear story or portion of the roof that juts up from the rest of the building draws hot air upward and naturally vents the structure. Large windows on the east and west side allow the sun to naturally warm the inside throughout the day.

"That is part of sustainable architecture, using less energy to maintain a building," Baker said.

Green architecture in a historic district for Baker is synonymous with good practical design.

"In today's design market it's a new buzzword," he said. "For us who have been around, it's old news."

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The Ypsilanti Savings Bank building, on the corner of Huron and Michigan Avenue, was erected in 1887 at a cost of about \$20,000. The bank was previously known as Hemphill and Batchelder, but the name was changed upon moving into the new building. The building has been the Ypsilanti City Hall since 1974.

CITY OF YPSILANTI  
HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION  
MINUTES of MARCH 7, 2006

HDC invited to Ypsilanti Food Cooperative presentation on Solar Project on 3-11-06.

**CITY OF YPSILANTI  
HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION  
MINUTES of MARCH 20, 2007  
STUDY ITEMS**

312 N. River, Study Item

Applicant: Corinne Sikorski and Dave Strenski, Ypsilanti Food Co-op (Present)

Discussion: Applicants would like to install additional solar panels on the roof to increase their power generating capacity. They had previously installed four panels and are currently in the process of applying for a grant to install fifty more. Applicants are seeking a strong letter of support from the HDC to include with their grant proposal so that the funder will be confident of the HDC's approval of the project if funds are granted. Applicant demonstrates various placements of the fifty new panels with a model and Commissioners agree on an arrangement that would be acceptable. Commissioner Rigdon agrees to draft a letter by the end of the month.

**CITY OF YPSILANTI  
HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION  
MINUTES of May 1, 2007  
STUDY ITEMS**

One South Huron, Study Item

Applicant: Dave Strenski, Ypsilanti Solar Project (Present)

Bill Bohlen, City of Ypsilanti Department of Public Works (Present)

Discussion: The applicant has submitted a plan to equip Ypsilanti City Hall with solar power. The proposal calls for a row of twelve solar panels to be attached to the south wall of City Hall above the fourth story windows, as well as a sign. The applicant had noticed that the south wall of the building was bare and has no shade, so recognized it as an excellent location for solar panels. In addition, as the wall faces inbound traffic to the city, the prominent and visible placement of solar panels could serve as a demonstration project, which would also involve adding a meter to the City's website showing the amount of power generated from the panels. Mr. Bohlen adds that this project would dovetail with a recent project to improve the City's energy efficiency undertaken by his department in partnership with Honeywell. In conjunction with other efforts, such as improving insulation, Honeywell has offered to help fund the solar panel installation, since its visibility would have a greater impact on public awareness than insulation. Commissioner Rigdon asks if any of the available photovoltaic skin products have been considered instead of panels. These would have a minimal effect on the building's appearance. Applicant states that since the skins are mounted onto a building 6 flat, they would reduce power generation. The ideal setup for maximum efficiency is to have a 38 degree angle, or perpendicular to the sun's rays.

Commissioners ask how the panels would be attached to the building. Applicant states that aluminum brackets would be bolted to the masonry and the panels would be mounted on the brackets. Commissioners express concerns with this approach since it would involve damage to the bricks and suggest the applicant investigate the possibility of attaching panels to brackets that would hang from the parapet wall. This would minimize the need for drilling into the masonry, as only a few bolts would be needed to stabilize the brackets. Commissioners ask whether the applicant has considered installing the panels in other locations on the building such as on the roof or lower on the south wall. The applicant explains that he has considered all of the options and while they are possible each has its own drawbacks. A roof installation could result in damage to the

roof membrane, would reduce efficiency of power generation due to shadows created by existing objects and, since counter weights would need to be used, the structural load would be greater. Mounting the panels lower on the south wall creates the potential for vandalism and again would reduce efficiency due to afternoon shadows.

Commissioner Schmiedeke states that she supports the installation of solar panels in the District in locations where they are not visible. This project as proposed is both very prominent and on a public building, so Commissioners agree that it must be considered very carefully. It will likely be seen as a precedent and would therefore influence public perception, possibly causing property owners in the Historic District to believe they could receive approval to install solar panels on visible areas of their buildings. Commissioner Rigdon notes that in the past, when the HDC has approved a project with special circumstances, an explicit statement was included in the motion indicating the approval is unique to that particular project. In this case, some consideration could be made for the public nature of the building and education value of the project. As this is a relatively new issue that is likely to become increasingly common, the Commission would like to thoroughly look into all of the various issues, including structural issues relative to installation of panels and concerns about the intentional visibility for demonstration purposes and how this will affect the decision as a precedent. Commissioners express the need for a greater understanding of alternative energy developments and how they might be applied to buildings in the future as well as an exploration of how this issue has been handled in other historic districts. Commissioner Rigdon offers to contact the State Historic Preservation Office to learn their approach to these issues and to do more general research so that the HDC can work to create guidelines and a Fact Sheet for future situations. Commissioner Overland would like this project to become an example of how solar panels can be handled appropriately, in order to create a standard that can be applied in the future.

**CITY OF YPSILANTI  
HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION  
MINUTES of May 15, 2007  
OTHER BUSINESS**

Report on alternative energy in Historic Buildings and Districts  
Commissioner Rigdon reports her findings relating to possible applications of alternative energy in the Ypsilanti Historic District. She describes possible applications and where they may cause problems. She has prepared a four page draft of a manual for consideration. The Michigan State Historic Preservation Office has been consulted regarding the proposed solar panel installation on the south wall of City Hall. The project would not be supported as a permanent fixture, but possibly as a demonstration project of limited duration.

**CITY OF YPSILANTI  
HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION  
MINUTES of JUNE 5, 2007  
STUDY ITEMS**

One South Huron, Study Item

Applicant: Dave Strenski, Ypsilanti Solar Project (Present)

Discussion: The applicant is following up on his previous presentation to the Commission in which the possibility of mounting solar panels to the south side of City Hall was discussed. At that time, Commissioners expressed concerns with how the panel installation would affect the masonry wall. Applicant has revised

his mounting structure. Instead of mounting the panels onto seven triangular frames that would be attached to two longitudinal rails, the panels would be on thirteen triangular frames mounted to the brick wall. The applicant presents his preliminary structural analysis, which shows that maximum loads could be handled by the proposed hardware. A structural engineer will be engaged to complete a detailed review prior to actual installation, if the applicant receives approval to proceed. Commissioner Rigdon notes that the particular materials involved, relative to rated hardware, would need to be considered in the formal structural engineering review. Applicant explains how the anchors and bolts would be imbedded into the brick with epoxy. Due to this, the bolts would not be removable. If the panels were removed, the bolts would have to be sheared off. Commissioner Rupert asks about how the building's surface will be treated when the demonstration project is over. Applicant states he assumes it will be at least a 30 to 40 year project since that is the life span of the panels and removal has not been planned. Applicant would like a letter of support from the HDC in order to proceed with getting the detailed structural analysis and approval from City Council. Commissioners explain that they are in the process of developing a set of standards for this type of work, and will make a decision on this project when the standards have been formally adopted.

#### **OTHER BUSINESS**

Report on alternative energy in Historic Buildings and Districts

Discussion: Commissioners discuss the report prepared by Commissioner Rigdon on types of alternative energy installations for which the Commission is likely to receive applications. The research found that many historic districts allow photovoltaic panels on sides of the building other than the front façade. But the Ypsilanti Commission does not apply the concept of "non-character defining" elevations and treats all elevations equally. Although there may be some flexibility on this issue with non-visible sides, such as is applied to roof vents, no side of a building is unimportant. One of the key conclusions and recommendations of the report is the need for a policy that prevents any character-defining elements of buildings, such as architectural materials, windows, trim or any other elements, from being obscured, removed or damaged by an alternative energy installation.

Commissioner Schultz suggests requiring solar panels to be mounted flat to the surface, although this may need to be reviewed on a case-by-case basis since flat panels may not necessarily be less visible and would significantly reduce efficiency. The overall impact on building massing may also be an important consideration on a proposal for non-flat panels. Commissioners discuss whether issues such as cost-benefit ratio, payoff period and upgradeability should be part of the policy. Whether or not those considerations fall with the HDC purview, familiarity with them will help Commissioners while discussing projects with applicants, to ensure that applicants are well informed and their projects are well planned. Commissioner Schultz points out that applicants may have interests and concerns other than financial when proposing one of these projects. Commissioner Rupert expresses concerns with mounting systems and how they will affect historic material, particularly if mounting hardware would not be removable. Commissioners generally express concern that solar panel installations will tend to be permanent and left in place even after they become obsolete.

Commissioner Schmiedeke will prepare a draft of the proposed new Alternate Energy Systems Fact Sheet and distribute it via email for consideration and further discussion.

**CITY OF YPSILANTI**



**HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION  
MINUTES of JUNE 19, 2007  
OTHER BUSINESS**

**Alternative Energy Fact Sheet**

Discussion: Commissioners continue previous discussions of alternative energy installations and the proposed Alternate Energy Systems Fact Sheet. Commissioners further refine the goals and purpose of this particular policy. Commissioner Schultz discusses the idea that administrative decisions are not precedent setting, but that administrative bodies need to avoid making decisions arbitrarily. Commissioner Schmiedeke agrees that the Commission will not use one decision as a rule to follow in other cases. Commissioners agree on the importance of dealing with each application as an individual case and in accordance with the Secretary of the Interior Standards. Commissioner Schmiedeke notes that the resources in the District are each unique and individual. Discussion turns to the idea of balancing historic preservation issues with alternative energy concerns. Commissioners indicate that their obligation is to focus on preserving buildings. Applicants should bear the burden of balancing and integrating solar panels with the restrictions necessary for preservation of architectural character and materials. Commissioner Overland comments that the proposed City Hall solar panel installation seems to be a one-sided demonstration project that only demonstrates solar panels, without regard to their context. Commissioners agree that it would be much better to demonstrate how solar panels can be integrated into the landscape in an appropriate way. This could move the idea forward in a constructive manner with an installation project that inspires people rather than demonstrate something for which they would likely never receive approval.

**CITY OF YPSILANTI  
HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION  
MINUTES of July 3, 2007  
OTHER BUSINESS**

**Alternative Energy Fact Sheet**

Discussion: Dave Strenski, founder of the Ypsilanti Solar Project, asks when the Commission will make a decision regarding the proposed solar panels on City Hall. Commissioner Schmiedeke states that an Alternative Energy Fact Sheet is being prepared and the Commission is waiting until general guidelines have been determined and this fact sheet created before deciding on the specific application. Mr. Strenski asks if Commissioners have any questions. No questions are posed.

**CITY OF YPSILANTI  
COUNCIL MEETING AGENDA  
CITY COUNCIL CHAMBERS  
ONE SOUTH HURON, YPSILANTI, MI 48197  
TUESDAY, AUGUST 14, 2007**

**PRESENTATIONS -**

A. Solar Panel Presentation - Dave Strenski

**RESOLUTIONS/MOTIONS/DISCUSSIONS -**

Resolution No. 2007-175, authorizing the City Manager to submit a work permit application as an Action Item to the Ypsilanti Historic District Commission requesting

permission to install photovoltaic panels on the south face of City Hall.

**CITY OF YPSILANTI  
HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION  
MINUTES of AUGUST 21, 2007  
NEW BUSINESS**

301 W. Michigan and One South Huron, Action Item

Applicant: Steven Farat, Washtenaw County (Present)

Discussion: Application is for installation of two 5.8 GHz Directional Flat Panel antennas on the roofs of both buildings. At 301 W. Michigan (Key Bank Building), the equipment will include the one-by-one foot square antenna installed on a five foot tripod mast. At One South Huron (Ypsilanti City Hall), the one-by-one foot antenna will be attached to the existing radio tower mast, ten feet above the base. These antennae will provide wireless data connections from Washtenaw County's Towner Building to new offices at the Key Bank Building, relaying through an existing connection from the Towner Building to Ypsilanti City Hall.

Motion: Prebys (Second: Penet) moves to approve the application for 301 W. Michigan and One South Huron to include installation of a tripod mast and antenna on the roof at 301 W. Michigan and installation of an antenna on the existing mast located on the roof at One South Huron. Materials and installation shall match those proposed in drawings prepared by Rohn Industries (Drawing Number D980022) and additional documentation from Winncom Technologies Corporation, as submitted with the application.

The following Secretary of the Interior Standards were used in making this decision: #10 - New work shall be removable.

Approval: Unanimous. Action carried.

**CITY OF YPSILANTI  
COUNCIL MEETING AGENDA  
CITY COUNCIL CHAMBERS  
ONE SOUTH HURON, YPSILANTI, MI 48197  
TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 4, 2007**

**PRESENTATIONS**

Solar Panel Presentation - Dave Strenski (DVD of presentation on file in City Clerk's Office)

**Resolution No. 2007-175**, authorizing the City Manager to submit a work permit application as an Action Item to the Ypsilanti Historic District Commission requesting permission to install photovoltaic panels on the south face of City Hall.

RESOLVED BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF YPSILANTI:

Whereas, there is community support for solar power in the City of Ypsilanti; and,

Whereas, City Council seeks to increase public awareness, and provide educational opportunities, that clean energy technology is a vibrant growth industry that will create thousands of jobs in Michigan in the future; and,

Whereas, both Senator Liz Brater and Representative Alma Smith have sponsored bills calling for Michigan to adopt a renewable energy standard of 20% by the year 2020; and,

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, the City Manager or his designee is authorized to submit a work permit application as an Action Item to the Ypsilanti Historic District Commission requesting permission to install photovoltaic panels on the south face of City Hall.

OFFERED BY: Council Member Robb  
SUPPORTED BY: Council Member Filipiak  
VOTE: Yes: 7 No: 0 Absent: 0 Vote: Carried

**Resolution No. 2007-176, approving Solar Energy Grant Applications.**

RESOLVED BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF YPSILANTI:

Whereas, The City of Ypsilanti is committed both to environmental stewardship and also to pursuing cost savings in City operations;

Whereas, Funding for solar energy projects is available through the Michigan Energy Office's Community Energy Project Grant and Energy Efficiency & Renewable Energy Outreach Grant;

Whereas, this funding would allow for solar energy installations that would reduce the City's energy expenses, educate citizens on the potential of solar energy, and demonstrate the City's interest in environmental initiatives;

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the Ypsilanti City Council hereby authorize staff to develop solar energy projects and pursue these funding opportunities.

OFFERED BY: Council Member Robb  
SUPPORTED BY: Council Member Filipiak  
VOTE: Yes: 7 No: 0 Absent: 0 Vote: Carried

**CITY OF YPSILANTI  
HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION  
MINUTES of SEPTEMBER 4, 2007  
OLD BUSINESS**

One South Huron, Action Item

Applicant: Bill Bohlen, Director, Ypsilanti Department of Public Works (Present)  
Dave Strenski, Ypsilanti Solar Initiative (Present)

Discussion: Application is for the installation of twelve solar panels on the south wall of City Hall, just below the parapet wall. The applicant has not yet had a structural engineer analyze the proposed installation method, but will proceed with that step when/if approval is granted. Commissioners would like the analysis completed before they approve the installation since they are primarily concerned with how it will impact the historic materials and structure. Mr. Strenski explains that the brackets could be attached using quarter inch fasteners rather than the larger ones previously proposed. This approach would require more of the fasteners, but the smaller fasteners could be used in the mortar joints and would avoid damaging the bricks. Mr. Bohlen notes that repairs to the masonry wall are planned within the next five years, as well as re-roofing. When these projects are undertaken, the panels could be moved to the

roof, and the masonry wall repaired and repainted so that the installation would be reversible and would have no lasting affect on the wall.

Commissioner Prebys states that he is concerned with the "sail effect" of the panels mounted at the proposed angle. Mr. Strenski reviews his own wind load analysis, as illustrated in the application materials. He states that he believes it will not be a problem due to the positioning of the panels slightly away from the wall to allow wind to pass behind the panels. He notes that the loads will also be evaluated by a structural engineer. Commissioners emphasize the need for a structural engineer who understands historic materials.

Applicants indicate that they hope to use Fitzpatrick Structural Engineers in Ann Arbor. Commissioner Rigdon states that she knows the firm and would be comfortable with its familiarity with historic materials.

Commissioner Prebys asks about the educational value of a project that has a thirty year payback. Mr. Strenski states that the calculation for this time frame assumes that the cost of electricity will remain the same. If the cost increases, the payback time would shorten. Mr. Bohlen notes that the cost part of the equation is less applicable in this project because the installation and material will be paid for by grants and donations.

Commissioner Overland asks if there is any way this demonstration project can be made more relevant to residential property owners for use on a house.

Commissioner Penet agrees that this project seems specific to the downtown area and wonders about the value for residential neighborhood applications, although he feels it would work well as a billboard for solar energy in general.

Applicants agree that residential applications have different issues, but that since the currently proposed installation would be on a public building, this project could focus on public education in ways a private project could not.

Commissioners ask about the sign illustrated on the application materials, reading "Ypsilanti Solar Project" above the panels. Mr. Strenski states that he thought of printing the sign on vinyl and attaching with small fasteners.

Commissioners suggest that if the project and sign are approved, a rigid sign material or painting it on the side of the building would be preferable to vinyl.

Commissioner Rigdon notes that all Commissioners present appear to be in agreement on the appropriateness of the project as long as the structural engineering analysis supports the proposal. But the Commission cannot give partial or conditional approval so any approval will be granted only after a professional structural analysis is completed.

Motion: Rigdon (Second: Prebys) moves to table the application for work at One South Huron pending analysis of the proposed installation by a licensed, professional structural engineer to determine how the installation will affect the existing historic material.

Approval: Unanimous. Action carried.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

312 N. River, Action Item

Applicant: Dave Strenski, Ypsilanti Food Coop (Present)

Discussion: Application is for the installation of one solar panel to the roof to add to the existing array of four panels. The center parapet wall, to which the existing panels are attached, does not have enough space for the fifth panel due to a chimney obstructing the sun exposure. The applicant would like to remove the non-functioning chimney and level it off to the same height as the parapet wall, so that the fifth panel could be added to the row without obstruction. Or, if that is not possible, the installation would be carried out as proposed in the application, which would involve removing the existing solar panels from the wall and installing all five panels using a clamp system attached to the chimney. The row of panels would sit out in front of the west side of the wall and chimney with feet that rest on the roof. Commissioners

agree that the chimney should not be removed if it is not necessary for the installation.

Motion: Rigdon (Second: Penet) moves to approve the application for work at 312 N. River to include the addition of a fifth solar panel to the existing four panel array on the roof. Existing panels shall be moved and all five panels shall be installed two feet southeast of the existing placement, on the south side of the chimney using attachment system described in application materials. The following Secretary of the Interior Standards were used in making this decision: #10 - New work shall be removable.

Approval: Unanimous. Action carried.

**CITY OF YPSILANTI  
HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION  
MINUTES of SEPTEMBER 18, 2007  
OTHER BUSINESS**

One South Huron (Ypsilanti City Hall) Solar Panel Project

Discussion: Commissioners continue the ongoing discussion of the proposed City Hall solar panel project. Commissioner Overland brings to the attention of the board some additional concerns he has with this project as it has been proposed. Commissioner Overland comments that after more consideration he would like to see a different proposal for City Hall that would demonstrate the real possibilities for alternative energy in the Historic District. The City Hall project, as proposed, has benefits in how it demonstrates the use of alternative energy, but is not beneficial or sympathetic to its setting in the Historic District or to the HDC's purpose. While he supports alternative energy, Commissioner Overland would like to see how the City might incorporate it into the HDC in a more appropriate way. He believes that there are much better ways of demonstrating how solar panels can be used. The City Hall proposal is counterintuitive to HDC goals and seems regressive to the restoration of City Hall. The City chose to restore the building by removing the metal "cheese grater" siding, but now this project would alter a significant portion of the façade streetside view by allowing a new incompatible addition to it. The project could be more progressive if the panels were installed in a different location, such as on the roof of the building.

Commissioner Overland states that the HDC is a steward of the Historic District and acts on behalf of the City and allowing this project seems counterintuitive to the expectations and values under which any project would be considered. Commissioners believe that there are likely better, more appropriate alternatives for the installation of solar panels, options that would demonstrate to the public how this new technology might be utilized. But this application is focused solely on the back wall, which is fully visible and exposed to Huron Street, and most likely would not be allowed on any other building. Commissioners feel that a better choice for the project, such as a roof installation, could become an opportunity to demonstrate how other property owners might overcome various obstacles and issues by installing panels in locations where they would actually be permitted. Commissioner Penet believes an interesting idea might be to install the panels on the roof and have a meter on the south wall of the building to demonstrate their capabilities.

Commissioner Schmiedeke notes that since the HDC has not made a decision on this application yet, the discussion can continue and it may be useful to ask the applicant for additional information on some alternative installations. As the applicant is awaiting the structurally engineering analysis, the applicant can investigate different locations, such as the roof, or another building. Staff is asked to communicate with the applicant to request the information

**CITY OF YPSILANTI  
HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION  
MINUTES OF OCTOBER 9, 2007  
STUDY ITEMS**

414 N. River, study item

Applicant: Irmgard Gelletly, Owner

Discussion: Homeowner asks if solar installations similar to the proposed installation on City Hall will be possible elsewhere in the district.

Commissioner Prebys answers yes and informs Gelletly about the alternative energy fact sheet, of which she receives a copy. She states that she and her husband own the house next to the Thompson Block. Gelletly states that they are trying to "tighten up" the building (energy). The foundation is a problem because the crawl space is inaccessible. She asks if it would be possible to install insulation on the outside of the foundation. Commissioner Rigdon answers that it is technically possible, though may not be feasible for this particular building. She asks if it would be a spray on application. Prebys asks about the material of the foundation. Gelletly answers that it is many different types of stone covered in mortar. Rigdon states that the foundation is a nominal source of heat loss. The owner has had infrared studies done on her properties which show that the foundation has the insulation properties of a single glazed window. Siding on the building is currently asphalt which hangs over the clapboard, leaving a space underneath. Prebys agrees that it is something the Commission would be willing to discuss. Commissioner Rigdon will visit the property to get a better assessment of the situation and report back to the Commission on the 23 of October, and the Commission will report to the owner by letter. The homeowner then asks about the possibility of having skylights in the Historic District.

**CITY OF YPSILANTI  
COUNCIL MEETING AGENDA  
CITY COUNCIL CHAMBERS  
ONE SOUTH HURON, YPSILANTI, MI 48197  
TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 19, 2008**

**ATTACHMENT 1**

Quarterly Report to City Council

20/20 Task Force Activity List

B. Spurring business development, especially downtown

11. Continue to promote solar panel use on City Hall and elsewhere in the City: Several members of the 20/20 Task Force believe that Ypsilanti has an opportunity to redefine itself by going green. Toward that end, they are working on ways in which the city can reach out to sustainable/green companies, and make it known that our town is green friendly. One opportunity being pursued is taking our City Hall off the grid. Currently, members of the 20/20 Task Force, with others in the community, are attempting to raise the money necessary to have solar panels placed on City Hall.

**CITY OF YPSILANTI  
HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION**

**MINUTES OF MAY 13, 2008**

**OTHER BUSINESS**

City Hall Solar Panels - A grant has been received for the structural engineering report requested by the Commission.

**CITY OF YPSILANTI**

**HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION**

**MINUTES OF JUNE 10, 2008**

**NEW BUSINESS**

312 N. River, Action Item

Applicant: Dave Strenski, representative, Ypsilanti Food Co-op (present)

Discussion: In 2005, four solar panels were installed on the roof of the building. In 2007, a fifth panel was added. The current application is for the addition of 7 more panels. The proposed design includes adding one set of two panels to the left of the existing panels and a row of additional panels to the bottom of each of the existing panels. None of the changes will be visible from the street.

Also included in the application is the re-roofing of the building. The style of new vents will be similar to the current vents. Commissioner Rigdon informs Mr. Strenski that no torches may be used in the installation of the roof.

Motion: Prebys (Second: Penet) moves approval of the application for the addition of solar panels and replacement of the roof at 312 N. River with the stipulation that no flame shall be used during the installation of the roof.

Secretary of Interior Standards cited: #10 - New work shall be removable

Approval: Unanimous. Action carried.

**HOUSEKEEPING BUSINESS**

Solar Panels - The commissioners discuss the adhesive thin-film solar panels recently installed at the Ann Arbor Farmer's Market in Kerrytown. More information is needed.

**CITY OF YPSILANTI**

**HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION**

**MINUTES OF AUGUST 12, 2008**

**OTHER BUSINESS**

Solar Panel Discussion

Planner II contacted the interested party, Dave Strenski, for information on the progress of this project. An email was returned, stating that Mr. Strenski would like to know if the HDC would approve the project without the stamped design.

Mr. Strenski has performed the pull test on the back of the building, which incurred no damage. He would like to know if this information would allow the HDC to approve this application.

Commissioner Schmiedeke states that the Commission should review its guidelines on alternative energy installations before making a statement.

Commissioner Rupert states that the "back" of the building is not actually the back because, as S. Huron is a one-way street, the back is the first part of the building that people see when passing by. Commissioner Schmiedeke asks who in the city administration would be the actual applicant. Commissioner Overland discusses alternative energies that are being explored and developed worldwide. He states that he would like to see a local alternative energy demonstration, but one that meets the Secretary of Interior Standards that guide the HDC in its decisions. He feels that the solar panel installation, as proposed, is not as forward thinking or progressive as it could be. Commissioner Prebys inquires about thin-film solar. Commissioner Schmiedeke expresses concern regarding

unused panels remaining mounted on the building when the technology has become obsolete. Commissioner Penet expresses concern over recouping the costs of installing the panels on the building. Commissioner Overland suggests that the HDC have a presentation from an expert on alternative energy at the next meeting. Commissioner Penet asks if it would be a good idea to ask a private citizen if they would be willing to submit their home for the demonstration project by placing thin film solar panels on the roof. He states that doing a demonstration on a residence might be more impressive and realistic for the community.

**CITY OF YPSILANTI  
HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION  
MINUTES OF AUGUST 26, 2008  
OTHER BUSINESS**

Solar Panels - Some concern has been expressed regarding the installation of panels on the roof due to the age and condition of the roof. Staff spoke with City Manager who believed there was still a structural test that needs to be done on the back wall and roof, but this has not been clarified. Commissioner Overland asks that Marc Greuther, curator of Industry and Design at the Henry Ford, be put on next meeting's agenda to give a presentation on alternative energies and have an open dialogue.

**CITY OF YPSILANTI  
HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION  
MINUTES OF SEPTEMBER 9, 2008**

Solar Panels - Pull test on rear wall of City Hall revealed no potential problems. Final construction drawings are being worked for eventual review. Funding is in place for hardware and installation. Solar panels on the roof are not feasible due to the condition of the roof. Staff reports that Dave Strenski will likely be getting final designs to the Commission at the next or following meeting. The Commission wishes to know the City Council's stance on the proposed solar panels.

Commissioner Overland questions whether there is a more applicable test site for the solar panels than City Hall that business owners or residents in the historic district could engage with should the Commission not approve panels on the wall. Another concern is the cost effectiveness and the viability of the panels as a demonstration project, as well as concerns with future maintenance. Commissioner Schmiedeke raises the point that the district guidelines give the Commission no power to force an applicant to employ other energy conservation measures; however the Commission can consider whether the applicant has taken other measures. In this particular case, such measures have not been considered or implemented.

Discussion focused on possible ways for the HDC and City Council to share views. Staff will speak with the City Manager on this issue. Commissioner Penet suggests Commission identify other alternatives amongst city-owned properties as better demonstration sites offering just as much publicity value. Staff will look into the current grant to know if it is site-specific to City Hall.

Commissioner Penet, in his capacity as a member of the Friends of the Freighthouse, has

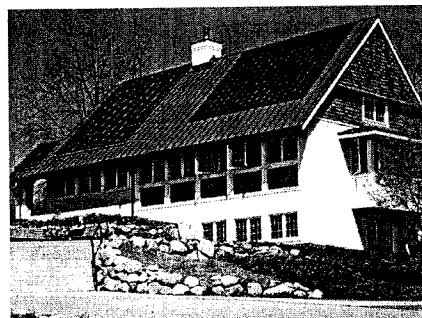


asked Dave Strenski to do a quick study of the applicability of thin-film solar to the Freighthouse. The payback is dramatically better because of the area of exposure. It could provide nearly all the electrical needs of the building and some of nearby streetlights.

# Meshing Old with New – Do Solar Panels Belong on Historical Buildings?

Historical buildings are loved, admired, and critiqued based upon their originality. As you stroll through the historical district of a city, you admire the beauty and majesty of the old-fashioned architecture. Whether it is the delicate trims or stately columns, old buildings are nostalgic and draw on our sentimental sides.

Furthermore, unlike the many manufactured products that make up new home construction, these buildings are full of natural products from wood to various stones. With all of this classic beauty, it is easy to understand why some may object to placing solar panels on the roof. Although you can't get much more natural than solar energy, the panels do tend to represent more of a modern contemporary appearance than a historical one.



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Naturally, this topic draws a lot of debate and differing opinions. Most environmentalists and conservationists welcome more energy efficient fuel sources, but also appreciate the irreplaceable historical appeal of old buildings. They argue that there is almost always a way to disguise or hide the panels somewhere on the building – on a back roof, or high enough to not be noticed.

Opponents worry about threatening the integrity of historical charm. They fear that the unique character of the building will be sacrificed in the name of energy efficiency. There is no reason, however, why both can't be achieved. Another well-known fact about older buildings is their difficulty for temperature control; they inevitably end up using more energy to heat and cool than more air-tight buildings.

As with most hot issues, there is a middle-ground on this issue where both sides can compromise and be satisfied. Perhaps the buildings can embrace partial solar systems, such as a solar thermal heating system.

If you have a historical building you'd like to convert to solar energy, request free estimates from prescreened solar installers in your area today.



Posted on September 10th in Solar News by Anna.

## Related Posts

- Considering Solar Panels on Historical Homes
- What's New in Solar? Solar Balloons and Indoor Panels
- Solar Going Big in California, New York

## Commission to consider solar panels on historic home

By **Elizabeth Dinan**

edinan@seacoastonline.com

September 29, 2009 7:10 PM

PORTSMOUTH - Skye Maher wants to install solar panels on the roof of her historic Middle Street rental property to heat water for tenants living in the seven apartments. Her biggest challenge will be gaining approval from the city's Historic District Commission, which is charged with being a stickler for historical correctness.

"It will be an interesting conversation and it has to happen," said Maher. "We need to begin to generate alternate energy sources for the next generation."

Maher and her husband John are scheduled to appear before the HDC on Oct. 7, to seek the commission's approval for the solar hot water system for the roof of their three-story 240 Middle Street property. The city "is espousing" its commitment to being more sustainable and the HDC should find a way to incorporate that into their regulations, she said.

"To date, they have not done that," said Maher.

HDC vice chairman Richard Katz said the commission approved a solar panel project for a property within the historic district, but it was for a home on an island off the end of Salter Street. Noting he can't discuss specific projects pending before the board, Katz said the introduction of modern technology to the exterior of a historic home presents "a number of divergent influences."

"Is there a solar panel look appropriate within the historic district?" he asked. "On the face of it, it is a tough deal."

The HDC oversees all new construction or additions to existing structures and any changes that affect the exterior of a building in the historic district. According to the city's Web site, "exterior changes include windows and window treatments, doors, building trim and any building element that changes in kind, form or shape."

Katz said the HDC has "been urged to be more aware of the sustainability movement," noting "it will have to be reconciled."

He recently attended an open house featuring a solar-powered water system and when he next sat on the HDC, he noted to his colleagues that they "might want to take a look at this house." "Sooner or later" the technology will be coming before the board, he recalled telling fellow members.

The Mahers' proposal makes it sooner, while Skye said she hopes the HDC will "find a way to balance" the appearance of the historic district with "a need for alternative energy."

"I'd like the solar panels in the front yard, but I don't think it would fly with the HDC," she said. "We're all used to seeing electrical lines through the historic district and chimneys are old, unusable technology, but they're now part of the iconic look of the district."

Katz said, "I really can't predict the outcome" of the pending HDC solar panel discussion.

"All I can say is I expect lively debate," he said.

That debate will be televised live on the city's public access television channel 22 on Oct. 7 at 7:30 p.m.

## Solar Panels Or Obey The Law?

Thu, 06/26/2008 - 21:13



**Editorial:** The Karaffa's installed solar panels on the roof of their house on Pearl Street. That's a laudable endeavor, but unfortunately they did it without a zoning permit. They surely knew they needed one - they had obtained a permit a couple of years ago when they intalled the standing seam metal roof on their house.

Their house is within the historic district and modifications are subject to the rules of the Architectural Review Overlay District. That part of our zoning code was written over thirty years ago to ensure that the historic district remains with the look and feel of a 19th Century village. That part of our law was written in response to the construction of the modernist addition to the library and the modernist building, Burke Hall.

No modernist building or addition has been constructed within the historic district since the passage of the law. Indeed, just this past year, the Library has de-modernized its addition and constructed additional space that fits in with the 19th Century look of the village.

However, over the course of a year, Denison has tried to construct modernist additions to Cleveland Hall, Denison has attempted to flood-light the modernist building, Burke Hall, and the Karaffa's have installed modern solar panels on the roof of their house - panels that are clearly visible from Pearl Street.

How did the Village respond to this? The Planning Commision by a vote of 4 to 1 approved the solar panels in spite of the fact that they clearly violate the intent and spirit of the law. Moreover, the Planning Commision did not somehow "punish" the Karaffa's for asking for "forgiveness" rather than "permission."

How should we deal with these issues in the future? I think the Planning Commission should, in the future, require a homeowner who has completed the work before the application is reviewed by the Commission, to remove the new work. In the case of the Karaffa's, they should have been required to remove the solar panels before the Planning Commission heard their application.

Is this too harsh? I think not and here's why. The Karaffa's installed a type of solar panel that is clearly visible and obviously inappropriate within the historic district. If the Karaffa's had come before the Commission, presumably, the Planners would have asked the Karaffa's to install a more suitable style of solar panel that would fit in with the look and feel of the historic district.

For example, they might have installed flat solar panels that fit between the raised seams of their metal roof.



But, the Planning Commission didn't have the opportunity to suggest or insist that the Karaffa's use such a panel that would

not compromise the historic district.

It seems to me that in our enthusiasm for encouraging solar panels, we have missed an opportunity to preserve our historic district.

A lot of the blame for that rests with the Karaffa's who went ahead with a project without a permit. More blame, it seems to me, rests with the Planning Commission who permitted the Karaffa's to present a *fait accompli* and then approved it.

Yes, our village should work with homeowners who wish to press the frontier of technology, but shouldn't those homeowners also work with our village?

Perhaps we should just follow the law and if that doesn't work, change the law.

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### why are we arguing about solar panels in Granville?

Submitted by Tracee Karaffa on Wed, 07/02/2008 - 17:15.

> Granville is a great place to live and raise a family, not because it happened to be founded in the 19th century, but because it is and always has been a progressive community blessed with a highly educated population and a modern university in our back yard. We do not live, nor do most of us want to live in a museum. Development needs to be tightly controlled in the Village and Township, but that is a very different argument from controlling every aesthetic detail in an AROD district with arbitrary boundaries including late twentieth century buildings, and many modern conveniences in full view. If we continue to argue about the aesthetics of important advancements like solar power, we've completely lost the big picture! The world is in trouble all around us. Two Billion live on less than two bucks a day, and I've met many living in slums on far less than that. Having friends who's lives are on the line right now as a result of global warming and the global energy and food crisis, it is very clear to me that there are much more important things we, the citizens of Granville, should be spending our time and resources discussing. After spending 3 days stuck in the middle of food riots in Haiti a couple of months ago, I know these problems to be fact, not political opinion as some would have us believe. We are the lucky ones who are only slightly inconvenienced by the problems killing those living on the edge. We are the ones with the resources to come up with solutions.

>

»

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### thanks for the solar

Submitted by YesMan on Thu, 07/03/2008 - 09:47.

Tracee, Don't let a few negative posts get you down. People aren't "pissed" at you. Overall, people are appreciative. You're breaking ground that should have been broken a long time ago, and others will follow. If the law needs to be cleaned up to clearly permit environmentally sound practices, it

will happen. Indeed, the planning code has many pages dedicated to sound environmental practices with regard to flood zones, drinking water, emphasizing pedestrians over cars, etc. Solar panels are in the tradition of Granville, not at odds with it. There's been a lot of huffing and puffing about what really is little more than tweaking a law. Smart people with forceful personalities is a Granville tradition, too. Don't let it wear you down. We thank you for the hard work of clearing a path for solar in the village.

»

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## This has never really been about solar panels

Submitted by Buckeye on Wed, 07/02/2008 - 22:38.

Dr. Karaffa,

Your perspective is interesting if nothing else.

This is not about Solar Panels. Nobody cares (in the grand scheme of things) that you added some glass to your roof. It looks different; it doesn't fit in; it doesn't improve your neighboring home's values; but no one really gives a hoot. It's your house. Do to it whatever makes you happy.

The continuing issue (in my opinion) is you chose to simply defy the village zoning laws. You may claim that there had been no precedent set for solar panels, but you had no problem going down to 2nd Street in Newark and getting a county permit for the same installation.

You defied the law, then tried to turn it upside down, and now people are pissed at your arrogance.

The fact that you feel we need to 'green up' is of no relevance in this argument. So, for you to make the above comments is nothing more than a political stand that has little bearing on your argument. We get it. The fact that you have a gas powered generator absolutely ruins your argument, but that's become the liberal way (do as I say, not as I do).

As green as you think we should be, I'm here to tell you that we all rely on the beauty of fossil fuels. I mean, when you travel to Haiti, did you sail down the Raccoon Creek, catch a tailwind on the Muskingum to Marietta; follow the Ohio to the Mississippi finding your way to New Orleans a la Samuel Clemens.... or did you jump a Jet loaded with fuel to Miami, then find your way to the islands via gas powered boat and or plane.

Green is fine. But until we include Nuclear, Coal, and other more efficient fossil fuel opportunities, we're really not solving any problems in the global economy.

The world is in trouble all around us because of political unrest, and dictatorial control. Imagine a world run on the Free Enterprise system. A world where each nation entrusted the rule of law to its citizens. A world population free to speak against anything and anyone they felt oppressed by without fear of losing their life.

I don't doubt the food riots in Haiti, but I question how they arose, and what part the government had in quelling such riots. You've been there, you've seen it first hand. I can't question that part. But knowing how so many governments handle 'entitlements', I do question your implication that we, as Americans, have some impact on their livelihood because we have the absolute freedom to live as we choose.

No one is above the law.

Everyone should play by the rules.

»

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## Should I reduce my standard of living to the world's average?

Submitted by ot on Wed, 07/02/2008 - 18:20.

I appreciate your many efforts for those less fortunate than ourselves. I have for a number of years contributed in a relatively minor way by buying more than I should have (given my income) at the annual Haitian art auction you so wonderfully arrange.

However, I am not inclined to support the lessening of Granville's standards.

The community decided some time ago (I suspect before you knowingly purchased a home in the district) that it would regulate the appearance of district properties. This regulation was enacted for a number of reasons including protection of our history, protection for future generations of the unusual concentration of 19th century buildings, and protection and enhancement of property values. People have made purchases in the district relying on the district architectural protections. That you now appear to not like those protections is fine. You have the right to not want to be covered by such protections. You just bought a house in the wrong area.

I know that I am consuming more than an equal (per capita) share of the world's resources. I know you are too. Everyone in Granville is. I know I would consume less if I would move to any number of places other than Granville. But, I want to stay in Granville. I like how nice it is. It is worth the tradeoff to me.

»

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## Perspective

Submitted by Cyclenut on Tue, 07/01/2008 - 15:22.

- *panels that are clearly visible from Pearl Street.*

And yet instead of a photo of the offending solar panels from Pearl Street, we have this photo ^^^^

...that is unless someone pulled the house from it's foundation and turned it 180 degrees. I suspect if the latter is the case, the Planning Commission would be most upset. ;-)

Rather likely, the view of the panels from Pearl Street were not nearly "objectionable" enough for the Granville Press readers in the eyes of management. In fact, from the angle of the photo and looking at satellite maps, it appears that photo was taken from a house on Summit. Keep pounding the square peg into the round hole GP Staff!

»

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## Don't the homes on Summit deserve protection?

Submitted by rogerh on Tue, 07/01/2008 - 21:21.

Cyclenut,

I have no idea from where the photo was taken, but I don't think it solves the problem when properties in the architectural review district can see the panels in question.

Roger

»

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## A matter of objectivity

Submitted by Cyclenut on Tue, 07/01/2008 - 23:13.

I agree with you sir, it makes no real difference where the photo was taken. I walked by today and the panels are visible from either Summit or Pearl. The point is the matter of objectivity. The panels are not "clearly" visible from Pearl Street as the article suggests. If they were in fact clearly visible from Pearl Street, why was a photo not taken *from Pearl Street*? Does the Granville Press editorial staff have a problem with presenting facts or is it simply a case of sloppy journalism? Maybe they spent too much time trying to interpret the "spirit" of the zoning code and not enough time on fact presentation. But I suspect it is more a simple matter of sensationalism: there is a very large tree that obstructs the view of the panels, in direct contrast to what the article suggests.

Either way, it is a moot point. The Planning Commission had never addressed the issue of solar panels and in a rare moment of wisdom, realized that opposing them was futile. And the homes on Summit do deserve protection, but maybe it's protection from an over-zealous Planning Commission. The adjoining properties did in fact submit letters of support for the panels. The Planning Commission did not lose credibility in approving them, they lost credibility in thinking they legally had a say in the matter. This was further exemplified by Tim Ryan's statement, *"The question is not whether you can see the solar panels. Part of our problem here is the solar panels have been installed. The application should have come before us prior to the panels being installed."* Is the Commission signaling its intent to hold a meeting on not only everything the code covers, but everything the code does not cover as well? Good luck with that one bucko.

To further state that the Karaffas should be punished for the ineptitude of the Commission is not just laughable, it's absurd. With statements like that, it may very well be that the credibility of the Granville Press is in doubt.

»

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### The View From Pearl Street

Submitted by editor on Wed, 07/02/2008 - 06:38.



»



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## What to do next

Submitted by YesMan on Sat, 06/28/2008 - 18:21.

This has been a healthy debate, both about solar panels and about preserving Granville's historic look. It's worthwhile to untangle the two issues.

First, we do have a problem with homeowners acting, then asking. It may date back to DanR's construction of his big barn, more than was approved. Despite the contentious back-and-forth, DanR got what he wanted. I think this undermined the cred of our zoning laws and our enforcement ability. Now, people put up everything — roofs, fences, solar panels, you name it — without approval and the Village has not docked a single offender. "Act first, ask later" is, in fact, a very effective strategy.

The problem is our zoning code has no mechanism to penalize a non-complier in a proportional way. The only recourse now is to order the entire offending change to be removed. But who wants to cost a homeowner \$10,000 because he put on illegal shingles?

I suggest adding a fine of \$100 to \$500 to the zoning code for failing to apply for the proper permit. A penalty proportional to the offense would be more effective than the current all-or-nothing approach. The Planning Commission would still have the power to reject the application.

Second, on solar panels. Let's allow them in all Village districts — even the historic district.

It's not a failure of the zoning code that no language exists on an issue that had never occurred before. It's our job to add appropriate language. I suggest a single amendment that applies across the Planning Code — rather than separate variations within each zoning district. The language should be general. "Something like: 'Solar panels shall be permitted subject to Planning Commission approval. The Planning Commission shall ensure that the solar panels are compatible with the architectural style and environmental needs of the building and neighborhood, to the extent reasonably possible.'"

The Village Council shouldn't sit on its hands on these issues. Quite simply, the Planning Commission doesn't have the tools it needs to do its job and only the Village Council can provide these.

The Planning Commission took a see-no-evil approach to get results that make sense (to me, at least). But long-term it undermines the credibility of the Village and increases the belief that playing favorites (on issues and people) — rather than following the law — is how things get done. That helps nobody. The perception of fairness and fairness itself are closely related.

»

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## The village already has the tools it needs

Submitted by ot on Sat, 06/28/2008 - 19:50.

I would agree with the idea of having a penalty in the zoning ordinance.

In fact, it is such a great idea that a penalty of the nature you suggest is already in the village zoning ordinance. [see section 1137.08 below]

With respect to the idea of a specific provision related to solar panels, I don't believe it is necessary. Included in chapter 1161 of the zoning ordinance (establishing the Architectural Review Overlay District) are sufficient criteria for the Planning Commission to use in evaluating various items placed in readily visible locations in the district. Past examples of items easily handled by the Planning Commission under this chapter, but not specifically listed in the zoning ordinance, include everything from air conditioners to garden sheds to hot tubs.

The problem in this case was the Planning Commission never had a chance to evaluate the solar

panels before the panels were already installed. Had they been able to do so, I suspect they would have suggested the very sort of panels mentioned in the editorial above.

However, there are clear problems with the village's enforcement of the zoning ordinance. What the Village Council, the Planning Commission, the BZBA, and Village Planner need are not more tools, but more help in understanding how to use the tools already available. The quality of the legal advice given to the village in zoning related matters has been, and continues to be, low. When the village is challenged in court, the legal advice given to the village has led to the village losing the case when the village goes against the applicant (e.g., Speedway) and when the village goes against those opposed to the application (e.g., Cleveland Hall). Whether the village supports the application or opposes it, what is consistent is the source of the legal advice.

Your comment raises an interesting question. Part of the role of an attorney is to come up with ways to solve client problems. Why has the village law director not suggested using the very sort of penalty you suggest; the penalty that is already in the village zoning ordinance?

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#### 1137.08 PENALTY.

No person shall locate, erect, construct, reconstruct, demolish, enlarge, change, maintain or use any building, structure or land in violation of any of the provisions of this Zoning Ordinance, or any amendment or supplement thereto adopted by Council. Whoever violates any provision of this Ordinance, or any amendment or supplement thereto, for which no other penalty is provided, shall be fined not more than five hundred dollars (\$500.00). Each day during which such illegal location, erection, construction, reconstruction, enlargement, change, maintenance or use continues shall be deemed to be a separate offense.

»

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#### finest for violations

Submitted by YesMan on Mon, 06/30/2008 - 09:10.

Thanks for pointing out that the Planning Code already contains (reasonable) fines for failing to get a required permit. The more I understand this 250-page law, the more thoughtful it seems. Each section seems to have been given great thought at some time in the past,

One question, though: Who imposes the penalty? The law doesn't seem to say. If possible, it seems proper to have the Planning Commission do it, with an appeal to Village Council permitted.

»

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#### Just The Facts:

Submitted by Tracee Karaffa on Fri, 06/27/2008 - 19:47.

- 1) House color is not regulated in the historic district in Granville - no one has to ask permission to change the color of their house. I have heard this before; must be a case of "if you tell a lie enough times, people start believing it." This tactic has been all too familiar over the past few years.
- 2) Solar panels raise the value of a house, which raises the value of homes in the community. I'd like to know where "rod363" gets his or her "facts". In fact, according to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, home values rise an average of \$20 for every \$1 reduction in annual utility bills.... And, from Business 2.0 Magazine, 10/06; "Considering a remodeling project to boost the value of your home? Before you drop \$40,000 or more on a new kitchen or master bath, consider the newcomer on

the renovation block: a rooftop solar-power system that not only will lower your overhead costs and insulate you from a volatile energy market but will likely add just as much to your home value over the long haul." In addition, every home owner with property contiguous to ours submitted a letter of support for our solar panels to the planning commission.

3) The main reason we chose the panels currently installed, is that they are far more efficient than the roll-down type. They are also trimmed in bronze to match the roof. The cost of the system was \$26,000, not cheap; but, if you can produce twice the electricity for the same cost, it is a better value.

4) Our house was built in the early 20th century, and it's style was completely altered when the 2nd story was removed in the mid 20th century. Granville has rightfully changed with the times: we've paved roads, added gas, electric, telephone, cable, air conditioners, and TV antennas.

5) Generators are not regulated. They can be installed in full view. Solar panels had never been addressed, so why would it be assumed that they are regulated? More than "change the law", we really just need to enter the 21st century and address the issue of Solar panels, as well as other renewable energy sources in the AROD ordinances. Granville has shown us it overwhelmingly supports promotion of clean, renewable, local energy. Thanks!

>>

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### The question is the impact on the other homes in the district

Submitted by rod363 on Fri, 06/27/2008 - 21:10.

You are right on target on the question of house color. The only local control of color are private restrictions in developments like Bryn Du.

I suspect you may be right that your solar panels may be raising the value of your home. However, I doubt that solar panels, of the design chosen, increase the value of other homes in a district where people buy houses in part because of the historical authenticity of the district.

Air conditioners are regulated. If generators are not being regulated by the planning commission then we have yet another example of inconsistent behavior by the planning commission.

>>

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### I feel ripped off

Submitted by rod363 on Fri, 06/27/2008 - 02:13.

I like the idea of solar panels and applaud the Karaffa's for their efforts on conservation. However I also believe in the importance of the architectural review district in protecting and enhancing property values.

When asked in earlier comments why they did not install the more suitable solar panel you have pictured, Dr. Karaffa offered in explanation that the more suitable solar panel would have had a higher cost.

In other words, they were aware of the panels that would have been more suitable for the architectural review district; panels that would have maintained property values for others in the neighborhood. But they just decided to forgo getting a permit and put up the cheaper, relatively ugly, panels.

Now let's contrast this with my last home project. I, rube that I am, applied for a permit and willingly paid for the required significantly more expensive shingles so the roof of my house would have the historically accurate appearance of slate.

How does the planning commission repay me for following the rules? They allow the Karaffa's to reduce property values in the district, including mine, by endorsing a clear violation of the zoning ordinance. Really nice. I get to pay more money to keep the Karaffa's property values up, and then the Karaffa's

get to cheap out and reduce my property values.

Now I don't impute any ill motive whatsoever on the part of the Karaffa's. I suspect at the worst they did not really think about how their project might impact neighboring property values. But, that is one of the central jobs of the planning commission. For me this is yet another example of the current planning commission's inability to fairly and evenly apply the law.

»

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Hmmm..

Submitted by ct on Fri, 06/27/2008 - 07:48.

I like the idea of solar panels and applaud Tracy and Bob.....SO:

- 1) they get to have their panels and not have to follow the process..
- 2) BREWS has always been a good citizen but the Village threw a fit because the mesh on the balcony wasn't what the Village said was ok...even though it was in alignment with the rest of the design AND was safer, objects couldn't fall through.
- 3) You have to jump through hoops to change the color of your house but the Village was giving Denison a pass on the process, too. (I like the Cleveland Hall design.)

Who is advising the Village in these matters? Oh yeah, it's the Village Law Director.....if any of us did our job that poorly we'd be fired!

»

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## **Alexander Balloon**

Historic Preservation & Urban Redevelopment

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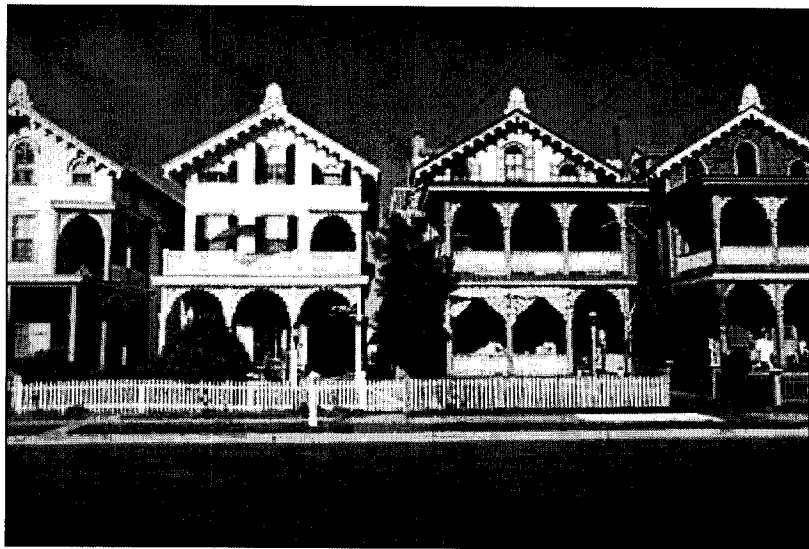
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# **Historic Preservation & “Green” in Cape May**

June 23, 2010 by [aballoon](#) [Leave a Comment](#)



Balancing Historic Preservation with Green Technologies

There has been a lot of talk about Historic Preservation and the need to incorporate Sustainability. Most Preservationists have adapted to the movement quite easily. “The greenest building is the one that is already built.” A while back I heard a statistic that one brick represents an energy expenditure of 10 gallons of gasoline. I think it’s very important to understand that sustainability and historic buildings need to work together. For example, sustainability advocates urge that buildings use paints with low volatile organic compounds (VOCs) while preservationists argue for historic purity and the use of historic colors. Could we split the difference and use low VOC colors on the walls and a high-gloss finish on the banister? It’s trade-offs like these that require careful consideration and flexibility when incorporating green elements into historic buildings.

The hegemony of the LEED program by the US Green Building Council is problematic to me, as it seems to be such a rigid dogma that doesn’t allocate values fairly. Receiving the same number of “points” towards a rating for cleaning up a brownfield and adding a bike shower is problematic. The cost of brownfield remediation is in the millions, while a bike shower may be in the thousands. The effort expended and value delivered are radically different.

Enter the Philadelphia inquirer. In “Historic Cape May Allows Newfangled Alteration” reporter Jacqueline Urgo talks about the new incorporation of green elements into historic Cape May buildings. The pejorative title of the article paints preservation efforts as backward-looking and antiquarian. Quite frankly, preservation commissions have been allowing “newfangled alterations” for years. Utility and HVAC upgrades, additions, life safety improvements, and security changes have been added to historically regulated buildings all across the state of New Jersey.

The reporter writes, “So when his application to install the solar panels was approved by the venerable commission – an agency that recently decried energy-generating wind turbines inside the town’s historic zone – Mark Kulkowitz was ecstatic.” These are two different things. In a National Historic Landmark city whose lifeblood is tourism and whose bones are made of historic Victorian fabric aesthetics don’t just translate into beauty; they translate into economic activity and jobs. Wind turbines have a very high aesthetic impact in the historic district. Solar panels have a much lower impact, when placed discretely on the roofs of historic buildings.

This historic building owner is to be commended for all of his green efforts. “Kulkowitz, who operates the establishment with his wife, Pam Huber, said the “go green” concept had been at the forefront of a major renovation the last several years. They switched to an industrial dishwasher that is supposed to save 100,000 gallons of water a year, energy-efficient lightbulbs and showerheads in all the guest rooms, linen-free tabletops in the restaurant, and earth-friendly, clay-based wall and ceiling colors instead of commercial paints containing volatile chemicals.” Here’s the VOC trade-off I previously mentioned.

The article interviews a commission member:

Tom Carroll, a member of the Cape May Historic Preservation Commission, said “jumping” should be done with caution in Cape May’s preservation district.

He said the commission, notorious for turning down homeowners’ requests to replace salt-air-

ravaged wooden siding and window frames with vinyl and other materials, allowed Kulkowitz's project and a few smaller homeowner solar projects with "much thought and consideration."

"I think moving in this direction needs to be done, but it needs to be done at a reasonable pace and very carefully," Carroll said. "I'd hate to see us sacrifice our historic district for the sake of new technologies."

In the future, he predicted, preservation agencies like Cape May's will be more open to new technologies when they are developed to "minimize the visual effect."

Cape May is fortunate to have commission members like Tom who carefully consider the implications of new green technologies instead of merely rejected any aesthetic change in the name of historic preservation. His careful consideration and helpful guidance to homeowners is to be commended.

The reporter also interviewed Donovan Rypkema, a consultant who is well-respected and someone who has worked to balance historic preservation and sustainability. I think his quotes are right on the money.

"I'm for projects such as these when they can be done discreetly and sensibly," "But the historic-preservation community needs to demand from these new technology companies that they create products that do not compromise the historical integrity of these buildings," Rypkema said. "We can't buy into the argument that saving energy is more important than historical integrity."

In truth these comments embody the thinking of preservation advocates. Technologies come and go. Preservation commissions and their dedicated volunteers work hard to protect and ensure the continued existence of these important buildings. Today's wind turbine may be tomorrow's Betamax tape player or asbestos siding. By carefully considering the consequences of these technologies commissions can make well-informed decisions to steward these buildings into the future.

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## Solar panels appear in Breckenridge Historic District

Four permits have been issued for installation of the eco-friendly technolog in Breckenridge  
ROBERT ALLEN  
BRECKENRIDGE, CO COLORADO,

BRECKENRIDGE, Colorado — A full year after Breckenridge Town Council approved legislation allowing solar panels in the historic district, four permits have been issued for installation of the eco-friendly technology.

"We're starting to see more applications come in for it (and) talk to more people about it," town planner Julia Puester said.

She presented the town's policy at a historic preservation conference in February, where she showed slides of Abbett Placer Inn — the first historical site in the town's historic district to install solar panels.

Innkeepers Emma Walch Hagen and Niels Hagen said they're pleased with the installation of 13 photovoltaic solar panels on their structure that was built in the 1890s.

The couple's business saved more than 50 percent on the panels, which Innovative Energy installed in January. The \$22,000 system pulled in an \$11,700 rebate from Xcel Energy and a \$6,700 tax credit from the federal government, Emma Walch Hagen said.

She said she and her husband are always looking for ways to be more environmentally friendly. The couple lived in Europe for five years before moving to Breckenridge.

"Solar is taking off in England," Emma said of her home country. "There are whole new buildings going up with complete solar roofs on them."

Innovative Energy engineer Sean McPherson said that in the course of a year, a system such as Abbett Placer's averages about 375 to 380 kilowatt hours of energy per month.

The average Colorado home uses 700 kWh per month, according to the Center for ReSource Conservation at [conservationcenter.org](http://conservationcenter.org).

McPherson said the systems are set up to run primarily off of the solar panels, switching to the electric grid when needed. Any unused energy in a given month is rolled over as credit for the next month on a person's energy bill.

But not every structure in the town's historic district can benefit from solar panels. Town staff must first determine whether a proposed installation meets specific criteria — such as low visibility from public right-of-ways — before a permit is issued.

Julie Edman, a CPA on Harris Street Alley, was one of the first in the town's historic district to install photovoltaic panels.

"They're great," she said, adding that between the installation of the panels and gas-powered heating, her bills are "half what they used to be."

Puester said the other two sites with permits in the district are Salt Creek Restaurant and Saloon, and the Summit County Housing Authority Office. Salt Creek's hasn't been installed, but is approved as solar thermal — which frequently involves concentration of sunlight to heat liquid as opposed to photovoltaic panels, which directly convert the energy to electricity.

She said thermal solar is becoming more popular for restaurants to heat water.

"Also, I've seen interest in thermal solar for snow-melt systems," she said.

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## Commission to consider solar panels on historic home

By **Elizabeth Dinan**

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September 30, 2009 2:00 AM

PORTSMOUTH — Skye Maher wants to install solar panels on the roof of her historic Middle Street rental property to heat water for tenants living in its seven apartments. Her biggest challenge will be gaining approval from the city's Historic District Commission, which is charged with being a stickler for historical correctness.

"It will be an interesting conversation and it has to happen," said Maher. "We need to begin to generate alternate energy sources for the next generation."

Maher and her husband, John, are scheduled to appear before the HDC on Oct. 7, to seek the commission's approval for the solar hot water system for the roof of their three-story 240 Middle St. property. The city "is espousing" its commitment to being more sustainable, and the HDC should find a way to incorporate that into its regulations, she said.

"To date, they have not done that," said Maher.

HDC Vice Chairman Richard Katz said the commission approved a solar panel project for a property within the Historic District, but it was for a home on an island off the end of Salter Street. Noting he can't discuss specific projects pending before the board, Katz said the introduction of modern technology to the exterior of a historic home presents "a number of divergent influences."

"Is there a solar panel look appropriate within the historic district?" he asked. "On the face of it, it is a tough deal."

The HDC oversees all new construction or additions to existing structures and any changes that affect the exterior of a building in the Historic District. According to the city's Web site, "Exterior changes include windows and window treatments, doors, building trim and any building element that changes in kind, form or shape."

Katz said the HDC has "been urged to be more aware of the sustainability movement," noting "it will have to be reconciled."

He recently attended an open house featuring a solar-powered water system and, when he next sat on the HDC, noted to his colleagues that they "might want to take a look at this house."

"Sooner or later," the technology will be coming before the board, he recalled telling fellow members.

The Mahers' proposal makes it sooner, and Skye said she hopes the HDC will "find a way to balance" the aesthetics of the Historic District with "a need for alternative energy."

"I'd like the solar panels in the front yard, but I don't think it would fly with the HDC," she said. "We're all used to seeing electrical lines through the Historic District, and chimneys are old, unusable technology, but they're now part of the iconic look of the district."

Katz said, "I really can't predict the outcome" of the pending HDC solar panel discussion.

"All I can say is I expect lively debate," he said.

## MEETING

The Historic District Commission's debate over a proposal to bring solar technology to a residential building on Middle Street in Portsmouth will be televised live on the city's public access television Channel 22 at 7:30 p.m. Oct. 7.

## Breckenridge encourages solar panels for historic district



### Solar Energy

Tuesday, 03 June 2008 09:55



Breckenridge officials are grappling with how to usher eco-friendly solar panels into the town's historic district while preserving its renowned Victorian charm. With a new ordinance, the town cautiously is moving toward encouraging solar power in the downtown area, provided that cells are kept mostly out of sight.

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In the historic district, property owners may not install solar devices if the town determines them "detrimental to the character" of the vintage buildings.

"That perplexes me," said Breckenridge author and historian Mary Ellen Gilliland, "because the green side of me says, 'Yes,' and the historic side of me says, 'Don't change buildings in the historic district.'"

The ordinance, which is expected gain final approval on June 10, creates standards for solar panels and other photovoltaic devices in the town's development code and includes more flexible guidelines outside the downtown district.

The historic-district code is "one of the toughest sections" said town manager Tim Gagen, and because solar panels "stick out," they've previously been more difficult to accept.

"Technically in the historic district, when you keep up your home, you're supposed to use the same historic windows — late 1800s to 1900s, single pane," Gagen said, adding that this isn't especially energy efficient.

Newer products that mirror the historic elements are available, he said, and the town has worked for the past several years to make the code more conducive to energy efficiency.

The new ordinance calls for solar devices to be coordinated with the roof's color and run parallel to the original roofline.

Sean McPherson is a mechanical engineer with Innovative Energy, a Breckenridge company that installs solar panels. He said such guidelines are generally not feasible.

McPherson said solar panels must face south, tilted at an optimal angle of 45 degrees. He said custom-colored panels might be available, but the cost would be "through the roof."

Breckenridge Mayor Pro-tem Eric Mamula said the town had difficulty determining guidelines pertaining to the historic district.

"It's sort of the starting point, and we'll see how it goes," Mamula said. "If we have to fine tune the thing, I think we will."

### **Sun power rises**

Mayor John Warner supports "adaptive re-use," which improves a historic building, "making it as energy efficient as possible without changing the character."

One enticing technology, he said, involves roof-integrated solar systems that use photovoltaic cells in devices similar to shingles.

But McPherson said such cutting-edge systems haven't been proven to "hold up in alpine environments," and installers have few high-efficiency options other than the more-traditional panels.

The average home requires about 30 solar panels, which each span about 2-1/2 feet by 5 feet and do not lie flush with the roof, McPherson said.

"What's the aesthetics of a power substation or lines all over the county?" he said.  
Julia Skurski, a town planner, said Breckenridge has approved 16 solar projects, including those yet-to-be installed.

"People are starting to rough-wire for solar panels so they can install them later if they want to," she said. "We've seen a trend toward that, and we've really seen panels picking up here."

The town intends to install solar panels on the Timberline child-care center and the town data center. Town manager Gagen said an audit of buildings is being conducted to determine other sites with potential for solar devices.

Other towns with historic districts, such as Idaho Springs and Black Mountain, N.C., also have begun approving solar panels on old buildings.

But Denver suburb Greenwood Village recently rejected a request from a car-wash operator to install solar panels, citing appearance.

Breckenridge historian Maureen Nicholls said she's "very surprised" that the town is encouraging solar devices within the historic district.

"I'm glad the town is maybe seeing the light. You do have to change with the times, maybe a little bit," she said.

Town council member Jeffrey Bergeron supports the move toward solar energy in the historic district, even at the risk of alienating purists.

"In the old days, we could be very rigid about maintaining a precise historical character," he said. "When you look at it in terms of today's times, in terms of escalating energy costs and just what's the right thing to do for the planet, I think you have to be a lot more flexible."

Source: [Summit Daily](#)

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