

# ROUTT COUNTY BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

Timothy V. Corrigan  
District I

Douglas B. Monger  
District II

M. Elizabeth Melton  
District III

## Work Session

July 27, 2020

Times listed on the agenda are approximations and may be longer or shorter, or being earlier than scheduled, with no notice. Agendas are subject to change 24 hours before the meeting start time. To ensure you have the most up-to-date information, please check the agenda after 24 hours of its start time.

If you are joining the meeting for a specific item, please join 10 minutes before the item to ensure you are present for the beginning of the item.

Please click the link below to join the webinar:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85106670945?pwd=UXZZSGx1Q01Mc0s2ckIGVk13Qld5UT09>

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or +1 312 626 6799 or +1 929 205 6099  
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*The Routt County Board of Health or Board of Commissioners may enter executive session pursuant to C.R.S. 24-6-402(4)(b) to receive legal advice related to specific legal questions concerning Routt County's COVID-19 response.*

- 1. 10:15 A.M. LEGAL**  
Erick Knaus, County Attorney

The Routt County Board of County Commissioners may enter executive session pursuant to C.R.S. 24-6-402(4)(b) to receive legal advice related to specific legal questions concerning Routt County's COVID-19 response.

- 2. 11:00 A.M. PLANNING**  
Kristy Winser, Interim Planning Director

**A. SOL SMART DESIGNATION**

Consideration of the County's participation in the Department of Energy's Sol Smart program.

Documents:

**3. 11:45 A.M. COVID-19 WORK SESSION**

The Commissioners will address critical items for regular county and emergency operations related to the COVID-19 pandemic. Action may be taken and direction to staff may be given in relation to any of these items.

The Routt County Board of County Commissioners may enter executive session pursuant to C.R.S. 24-6-402(4)(b) to receive legal advice related to specific legal questions concerning Routt County's COVID-19 response.

**4. 12:00 P.M. MEETING ADJOURNED**

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**ROUTT COUNTY BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS**  
**AGENDA COMMUNICATION FORM**

<b>ITEM DATE:</b> July 27, 2020	<b>ITEM TIME:</b> 11:00 am

<b>FROM:</b>	Alan Goldich
<b>TODAY'S DATE:</b>	July 22, 2020
<b>AGENDA TITLE:</b>	Sol Smart Designation

**CHECK ONE THAT APPLIES TO YOUR ITEM:**

ACTION ITEM

DIRECTION

INFORMATION

**I. DESCRIBE THE REQUEST OR ISSUE:**

Pursuing designation through the Department of Energy's (DOE) Sol Smart program.

**II. RECOMMENDED ACTION (motion):**

Direct staff to work with the Sol Smart assigned professional consultant (Cadmus Group), with assistance from the Yampa Valley Sustainability Council to achieve Sol Smart designation for the County.

**III. DESCRIBE FISCAL IMPACTS (VARIATION TO BUDGET):**

**PROPOSED REVENUE (if applicable):** N/A

**CURRENT BUDGETED AMOUNT:** N/A

**PROPOSED EXPENDITURE:** minimal staff time

**FUNDING SOURCE:** existing budget

**SUPPLEMENTAL BUDGET NEEDED:** No

*Explanation: The Building Department has spent roughly 3.5 hours to date on this project, and we will only need to spend 2 more hours to complete the webinars. The Building Department views these efforts as Outreach and Education which is a defined program within our approved Budget for staff time. This form of Outreach and Education will actually benefit your community and may provide additional support for future Solar Grants or resources of financial assistance to our Routt County citizens who are seeking assistance to install solar panels. The webinars our Electrical Inspector will watch also will count towards CEU credits for his certifications, and provide him with further knowledge and education that can then be shared with our Contractors and Citizens.*

*The Planning Department has not spent any time on this project, except for initial discussions with Mark Collins, Interim County Manager, and preparation of the communication form. Up until this point, I have been involved with this effort as a private citizen, providing my knowledge of County processes and regulations. Moving*



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forward, it is anticipated that 4.5 hours will be required. This includes:

- Completing training webinars
- Presenting the finding of the review of the Zoning Regulations to Planning Commission
- Drafting of proposed language to be included in the update of the Master Plan

These efforts fall into several budget categories including Continuing Professional Education, Planning Commission, and Master Plan which are all defined programs within our approved Budget for staff time. All of these activities will benefit the community and may provide additional support for future Solar Grants or resources of financial assistance to our Routt County citizens who are seeking assistance to install solar panels.

<b>IV. IMPACTS OF A REGIONAL NATURE OR ON OTHER JURISDICTIONS (IDENTIFY ANY COMMUNICATIONS ON THIS ITEM):</b>
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N/A
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<b>V. BACKGROUND INFORMATION:</b>
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YVSC’s solar working group has approached the County to help it achieve designation through the Sol Smart program. Sol Smart is a program through the DOE that certifies that counties and municipalities have implemented solar friendly practices that help reduce the “soft costs” of installing solar projects. “Soft costs” mainly include permitting, inspections, review by Building, Planning, Fire and the local utility, community engagement, etc. The DOE utilizes a consultant out of Boulder, Cadmus, to work with counties and municipalities to review the activities they employ and documents those activities to achieve points. There are several levels of designation: bronze, silver, and gold.

The City has already pledged their participation and YVSC has started working with the Cadmus group on behalf of the City. More than half of the activities that achieve points are based on Building Department activities. Since the City has already pledged to achieve certification, and the City and County share the Building Department, almost all of this work has already been documented and completed and would apply to County designation. Cadmus has already conducted a review of the County’s Zoning Regulations and has provided results of this review.

Based on the review that has already been completed, the County is very close to being able to achieve silver designation. With very minimal staff time, the County could achieve gold. The additional work required would include online training courses for Building, Planning, and Fire staff (Fire training is not required but will provide additional points) as well as documenting practices and policies that are already in place. A solar information landing page will need added to the County’s website. All of the required content for this page will be provided and will be very similar to the City’s landing page that has already been drafted. YVSC has offered to complete the paperwork and coordinate with Cadmus to reduce the workload that would be put on staff to pursue this designation, so again, the amount of staff time needed to obtain this designation is minimal and the time that is needed will help the community gain additional locally produced solar electricity. Apart from the annual tracking of solar related metrics (which will be able to be accomplished through the new City View software), this designation does not require any annual upkeep. However the hope is that the solar friendly activities that are currently being employed will continue. To kick of County



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participation, a letter of commitment to the program must be provided. A template of this letter is attached for your review.

Solar friendly building and zoning is the wave of the future and is contemplated in the most recent building code standards (yet to be adopted by the County). This is a prudent time for the County to obtain this certification to show that the County is ready for, and encourages, solar.

<b>VI. LEGAL ISSUES:</b>
N/A
<b>VII. CONFLICTS OR ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES:</b>
N/A
<b>VIII. SUMMARY AND OTHER OPTIONS:</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Decline to direct staff to work with YVSC to pursue County designation</li><li>2. Table for more information</li></ol>
<b>IX. LIST OF ATTACHMENTS:</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Overview of Sol Smart program</li><li>• Commitment letter required by Sol Smart</li></ul>

# SolSmart Program Guide: Let's Go Solar!



All across the United States, communities are turning to solar energy for clean, reliable, and affordable electricity to power their homes and businesses. Rapidly declining prices for solar technologies have brought vast amounts of solar energy into the mainstream within a few short years. Millions of Americans now rely on solar to power the necessities of modern life.

In addition to keeping the lights on, solar energy provides many environmental, social, and economic benefits. It is a carbon-free electricity source that is an essential part of any strategy to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. An increasing number of communities are now using solar to meet climate change goals or renewable energy targets. At the same time, solar energy is a primary driver for job creation and economic growth. The Solar Foundation's *National Solar Jobs Census* found that solar employs over 242,000 American workers as of 2018, and since 2010 the size of the solar workforce has grown by 168 percent.

Consumers with the opportunity to install solar panels are finding that solar them saves money. Homeowners, businesses, schools, and local governments are using solar energy to drastically reduce their utility costs. Meanwhile, in the face of costly natural disasters that threaten the reliability of the electricity grid, solar can be combined with battery storage to provide backup power and make communities more resilient.

Yet, solar “soft costs” have significant local impacts to the affordability of solar energy systems. “Soft costs” refer to business processes or administrative costs that can increase the time and money it takes to install a solar energy system – costs that are then passed on to customers. These costs arise due to permitting processes, planning and zoning considerations, financing, and a wide variety of other factors. Overall, these soft costs represent about 64% of the total cost of a solar energy system.

To address solar soft costs at the municipal and county levels, the U.S. Department of Energy Solar Energy Technologies Office (SETO) funds [SolSmart](#), a program that provides designation and no-cost technical assistance to accelerate the development of local solar energy markets and reduce soft costs.

SolSmart benefits three primary stakeholders at the local level. The first is solar customers that can enjoy a greater return on their investment if soft costs are reduced. Cumbersome local government processes can add up to \$2,500 to the cost of going solar. Second, local governments benefit from the time and money saved by cutting red tape and making processes more efficient. For example, providing more accessible information on permit applications can decrease the volume of questions from installers and the number of incomplete applications, thereby reducing demands on staff time. Finally, local solar companies benefit from streamlined processes that reduce barriers to entering the market. More than one-third of installers say there are at least three communities they avoid because of local permitting difficulties, representing lost opportunities for economic development and job growth.

SolSmart has a goal of designating at least 300 U.S. communities by October 2020, and over 200 communities were already designated as of January 2019. The program's broad national reach is helping communities in all parts of the country make it faster, easier, and more affordable to go solar. The designation program is led by the International City/County Management Association, while the technical assistance program is led by The Solar Foundation.

## SolSmart: Recognizing Local Solar Achievements

SolSmart uses objective criteria (detailed below starting on p. 4) to measure local government progress toward creating a solar-friendly community. These criteria span the following eight solar-specific categories:

- Permitting;
- Planning, Zoning, & Development Regulations;
- Inspection;
- Construction Codes;
- Solar Rights;
- Community Engagement;
- Utility Engagement; and
- Market Development & Finance.

Addressing soft costs in these areas and achieving SolSmart designation sends a signal to solar companies that a community is "open for solar business," attracting economic development and helping designees share in the benefits of solar expansion. Best practices that local governments can take in these areas are listed in the application section.

## SolSmart Application and Designation Process

Any municipality or county, regardless of previous solar experience, is eligible to apply for SolSmart designation. Communities can begin by filling out an application at [SolSmart.org](https://www.solsmart.org). The program's review team then determines if the community already meets the criteria for a Bronze, Silver, or Gold designation. For communities that do not yet meet the criteria, SolSmart provides no-cost technical assistance to help communities achieve designation. At the time of publication, SolSmart offers this technical assistance to all participating communities, but it is not guaranteed to continue past 2020.

During the application process, communities are required to provide a formal letter of commitment acknowledging their solar energy goals and plans. In the application, communities should detail their actions and goals within two "Foundational Categories" - Permitting and Planning, Zoning, & Development Regulations. The remaining SolSmart Criteria are known as the "Special Focus Categories." Based on the eight categories, communities receive points to determine their level of designation as SolSmart Gold, Silver, or Bronze.



The SolSmart designation criteria are focused on aspects of solar that fall within a local government's jurisdiction, and the accompanying technical assistance provides communities with the tools necessary to pursue their solar goals. Each community committed to pursuing a SolSmart designation is eligible to receive no-cost technical assistance from The Solar Foundation and its partner organizations, which include experts on solar energy and local government processes. The technical assistance is directed toward attaining one or more SolSmart designation criteria and, ultimately, earning designation.

## How to Use This Application

The application is intended to help local governments and community stakeholders in cities, counties, and small towns design and implement plans to encourage solar energy development. Local governments can have a significant effect on the growth of solar in their communities. The application includes actionable steps and resources for local governments that want to reduce solar soft costs. It also provides a pathway to SolSmart designation.

# SOLAR STATEMENT



Friday, July 10, 2020

Scott Annis  
International City/County Management Association  
777 North Capitol St. NE, Ste. 500  
Washington, DC 20002

Theresa Perry  
The Solar Foundation  
1110 Vermont Avenue NW, Suite 930  
Washington, DC 20005

Dear Scott Annis and Theresa Perry:

On behalf of **community name**, I am proud to announce our commitment to become a SolSmart-designated community. In partnership with the SolSmart team, **community name's** dedicated staff members will work to improve solar market conditions, making it faster, easier, and more affordable for our residents and businesses to install solar energy systems. These efforts will also increase the efficiency of local processes related to solar development, which may save our local government time and money.

[OPTIONAL: SolSmart builds upon our community's participation in **relevant program(s) participation**, which resulted in **enter relevant outcomes**.]

**Community name** will leverage SolSmart to achieve the following goals:

- **Choose an item or enter a custom description.**
- **Choose an item or type a custom description.**
- **Choose an item or type a custom description.**

These efforts demonstrate that our community is committed to driving continual improvement in our solar market, and in the process of doing so, all the related areas identified as community priorities in our **relevant plans or initiatives**.

In order to measure progress along the way, **Community name** will track key metrics related to solar energy deployment, such as installed solar capacity and the number of installations across sectors.

[OPTIONAL: In these efforts, we call on our residents, businesses, non-profits, and others to get involved, and we invite everyone to stay tuned by visiting **solar landing page URL**]

Inquiries related to **community name's** SolSmart participation can be directed to **communications contact** at **E-mail address** or **phone number**.

Sincerely,

*Signed name*

Printed name  
Title