

The Sun Times

Pittsfield Solar Partnership With Ann Arbor To Proceed With 20 Megawatts Instead Of 24 Megawatts

Drew Saunders – Oct 4, 2021



The solar farm between Pittsfield Township and Ann Arbor is moving forward, albeit at a slightly smaller size. According to a press release from DTE Energy, the solar farm will now be 20 megawatts, four shorter than was originally announced.

“We initially thought the project would be 24 megawatts but there has been a change in the siting plan and the project is currently slated to be 20 megawatts,” DTE Energy Spokeswoman Cindy Hecht told the Sun Times News in an emailed statement.

A Pittsfield Township employee said that the final size of the utility-scale solar facility is not quite known yet because the final plans have not yet been submitted.

"Renewable energy is an integral component of Pittsfield Township's Sustainability Blueprint, which envisions significantly reducing our community's carbon footprint by 2025," Pittsfield Township Supervisor Mandy Grewal said in the press release. "That, combined with the fact that Pittsfield has been trying to install a solar array in our community for over a decade, makes the fruition of this project superbly exciting and gratifying. We look forward to continue working with our regional stakeholders and residents to promote environmental sustainability in our region."

Both municipalities and the local power utility company share a goal of decarbonizing their electric grids. Ann Arbor and Pittsfield Township teamed up for this project to produce as much renewable energy as is utilized by the municipal buildings operated by both the city and the township; thereby reducing Washtenaw County's overall carbon footprint. While it won't be that every single watt used by taxpayer-owned buildings will get their power from the new solar farm, the equivalent amount of power that they demand every day will be from the new solar plant, instead of being powered by coal, nuclear or natural gas power.

"The 20-megawatt solar park will provide Ann Arborites of all incomes the ability to subscribe to a local, clean energy initiative," Ann Arbor Mayor Christopher Taylor said in the same press release. "It is an important and exciting step on our path to equity-focused, community-wide carbon neutrality. City staff have worked on this project for over two years and though there's more to do, I am grateful for their individual and collective expertise, dedication and effort."

Natural gas provides 33 percent of Michigan's power, coal provides 27 percent and 29 percent comes from nuclear, according to the Energy Information Agency. Wind produces about six percent, according to the EIA, but the solar industry is an integral part of Michigan's plans to phase out fossil fuels.

Other plans to construct utility-scale solar projects in Michigan include the White Tail Power and Railsplitter Power projects in York Township and Augusta Township, as well as Assembly Power in Shiawassee County. However, this project differs because these other projects are located on farmland that the utility company plans to lease from the owners on decades-long projects. The City of Ann Arbor owns the land that is planned to be utilized for this new solar farm, according to DTE Energy.

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the fifth fastest growing occupation in the United States is solar photovoltaic installer; which installs solar panels. The federal labor statistics authority estimates that the number of jobs will grow by 52 percent this decade, with an average yearly pay of \$46,470 last year.

Construction on the project has yet to begin, but DTE Energy estimates that it could go online sometime in 2023.

“We want to thank the City of Ann Arbor, Pittsfield Township and the Michigan Public Service Commission for their partnership in moving this project forward,” DTE Energy President Trevor Lauer said in the press release. “We have been working closely with leaders of both communities to help them achieve their clean energy goals and help Michigan become a carbon neutral energy state.”

Mlive

Ann Arbor community solar project to begin generating energy in 2023, DTE says

Ryan Stanton – Oct 4, 2021



ANN ARBOR, MI — DTE Energy is moving ahead with a long-discussed community solar project outside Ann Arbor.

The 20-megawatt solar farm on city-owned property off Ellsworth and Stone School roads in Pittsfield Township is expected to start generating energy in 2023, the Detroit-based utility announced Monday morning, Oct. 4.

It's a first-of-its-kind community solar project for DTE and the company's first MIGreenPower project in Washtenaw County allowing DTE customers to subscribe to it.

DTE issued a request for proposals for the engineering, procurement and construction of the project on Friday and anticipates starting construction during the third quarter of 2022, pending Michigan Public Service Commission approval.

“With this project, DTE is bringing a large-scale community solar installation to the residents of Washtenaw County,” Trevor Lauer, president of DTE’s electric company, said in a statement. “This is just one of many new solar projects DTE plans to bring online by 2025 to empower communities of Michiganders to go solar together.”

Over the next decade, DTE will develop several utility-scale solar projects on the state’s shared electric grid, as well as smaller community solar projects, providing customers with increased access to low-cost solar energy, Lauer said.

Ann Arbor and Pittsfield Township officials have been working with DTE on plans for the huge installation on 77 acres at the city’s Wheeler Center maintenance facility property. The plan includes 65 acres of ground-mounted solar panels and 12 acres of floating panels on a pond behind the facility.

More than 3 megawatts of solar panels will be situated atop an old capped landfill there, according to DTE.

DTE is vowing to cover the cost of the project and expects it to cost considerably less than the previous \$50 million estimate when it was first being discussed publicly last year.

DTE customers will be eligible to participate in purchasing solar energy from it through DTE’s MIGreenPower program.

The 20-megawatt solar installation will be the largest in the region, according to DTE.

It’s also designed to support Ann Arbor and Pittsfield Township with achieving renewable energy goals.

The city is expected to serve as the project’s anchor tenant, meaning it will purchase power not subscribed by other customers. Pittsfield Township also is expected to be prioritized as the project’s first subscriber and will use the project to reach its 100% renewable energy goal.

“We want to thank the city of Ann Arbor, Pittsfield Township and the Michigan Public Service Commission for their partnership in moving this project forward,” Lauer said. “We have been working closely with leaders of both communities to help them achieve their clean energy goals and help Michigan become a carbon-neutral energy state.”

Mayor Christopher Taylor said the solar farm will provide Ann Arborites of all incomes the ability to subscribe to local clean energy and it’s an important and exciting step on the city’s path to equity-focused, communitywide carbon-neutrality.

“City staff have worked on this project for over two years and, though there’s more to do, I am grateful for their individual and collective expertise, dedication and effort,” he said in a statement.

“Renewable energy is an integral component of Pittsfield Township’s Sustainability Blueprint, which envisions significantly reducing our community’s carbon footprint by 2025,” added Mandy Grewal, Pittsfield Township supervisor. “That, combined with the fact that Pittsfield has been trying to install a solar array in our community for over a decade, makes the fruition of this project superbly exciting and gratifying.”

DTE said its MIGreenPower program, which allows customers to pay a few extra cents per kilowatt hour to subscribe to DTE wind and solar energy projects, has been particularly popular with Washtenaw County institutions, businesses and residents.

Washtenaw County subscribers include the University of Michigan, Washtenaw Community College, Ann Arbor SPARK, several small businesses and more than 6,000 residential customers, according to DTE, which calls it one of the largest voluntary renewable energy programs in the United States.

On an annual basis, MIGreenPower subscribers support 1.8 million megawatt hours of renewable energy, which has an environmental benefit equal to taking 277,400 passenger cars off the road for a year, according to DTE.

DTE hails itself as Michigan’s largest producer of and investor in renewable energy, with 50 wind and solar parks generating enough energy to power nearly 700,000 homes.

Over the next two years, DTE pledges to double its clean energy generation and invest an additional \$2 billion in renewable energy infrastructure.

DTE's announcement of the Ann Arbor community solar project comes as some local officials and residents are criticizing the company for not investing enough in renewable energy. Some are calling for forming a public power utility for Ann Arbor to shift away from DTE and work more aggressively toward the city's A2Zero carbon-neutrality goal of powering the entire community with 100% renewable energy by 2030.

Members of a group called Ann Arbor for Public Power, who hope to get the issue on the ballot in 2022, marched down Main Street during the city's annual Green Fair Friday night, carting an inflatable "municipal utility cash cow" named Moonie B, while handing out fake money with the messages "Municipal utility = budget stability" and "We own it, we decide, we build it."

The Sun Times

Washtenaw Heights is Getting Streetlights

Drew Saunders – Sept 27, 2021



Pittsfield Township took an important step to try to reinforce the safety and peace of mind for citizens of its Washtenaw Heights neighborhood with the introduction of a new public streetlight district, late September. There was some disagreement among the residents of the neighborhood – which is sandwiched between Washtenaw Avenue and Packard Street – but ultimately the measure prevailed with a unanimous yes vote from the Board of Trustees.

“I’m actually quite in favor of for this move because ever since my husband and I have moved into this neighborhood we have seen an uprise in crime and the amount of emergency services that goes on in this neighborhood in the nighttime,” Washtenaw Heights resident Kathleen Reff told the Sun Times News, in an interview by phone the following day.

The first time homeowner said that she and her husband were considering moving away due to a perceived lack of safety and drainage issues in the neighborhood; which got worse during the pandemic.

“Due to the lack of streetlighting, it has made it very, very opportunistic for people with ill intentions to be able to perform [illegal] activities because they feel more comfortable with not being seen,” Reff added.

Public Safety Director Matthew Harshberger acknowledged that violence had increased in general nationwide due to the Coronavirus lockdowns – in the neighborhood, across the township and nationwide – but property crimes had gone down significantly since everyone had been stuck at home. Property crimes are going up in general now that the lockdowns and restrictions have largely ended.

“From a police officers perspective, lighting does help from our perspective for safety. [Both] officers patrolling on the street and residents walking around the neighborhood, it allows for [the ability] to better keep watch,” Harshberger said.

The concerns over opioid abuse expressed at the meeting reflect a trend across Washtenaw County, Harshberger said. Pittsfield Township cannot look at Washtenaw Heights specifically in its statistical analysis of crime. But Harshberger did say there was a 13 percent increase in non aggravated assaults over the last two years – 123 in 2019 versus 129 so far in 2021.

According to the August monthly activity report that Hashberger sent to Pittsfield Township Supervisor Mandy Grewal; there were 324 calls for fire service, 1,095 calls for police service and 67 arrests. That is a decrease from July, which according to the report saw 328 calls for fire service, 1,253 calls for police service and 94 arrests. Calls for fire service were up compared to earlier in the summer. According to Pittsfield Township, there were 293 calls for fire service in June, 1,074 calls for police service and 72 arrests. In May, the DPS reported 294 calls for fire service, 1,100 calls for the police and 74 arrests.

No one who spoke at the late September meeting or who has been interviewed by this newspaper claimed that all public safety concerns would be solved by the introduction of the streetlights. But this resolution is intended to be a step in the right direction.

While there were plenty of people who were in support of the streetlights, some people were against on the grounds of necessity, light pollution and the fear that the lights would be powered by non-renewable sources on the grid. Some residents claimed that they were not informed in the ten month process while this proposal has been under review, or not notified early enough.

“We do not do surveys,” one resident said during the September 22 public hearing. “I just think it has a deleterious effect on pitting neighbors against each other.”

Multiple residents denounced a fair amount of misinformation regarding the streetlights.

“Multiple mailings – as part of the public hearing requirement and an independent mailer by me – were undertaken to all property owners in the neighborhood included in the special assessment district,” Grewal said in an emailed statement.

Pittsfield Township looked into putting solar powered units in the neighborhood but could not get them because DTE Energy does not have a supplier for them. Grewal said that the power used by the lights will come from renewable resources. This will be done through the Mi Green Power program.

“The MIGreenPower program is a turnkey renewable energy program that provides businesses, governments, and other institutions with a simple and cost-effective option for adopting renewable energy,” Grewal wrote in a [memo](#) on the project. “This “flat rate” MIGreenPower enrollment will allow Pittsfield to set a monthly dollar amount corresponding to the cost of renewable energy desired for the energy the streetlighting is estimated to use. This program is expected to be rolled out in the beginning of 2022 and a Resolution will be brought before the Board of Trustees for consideration as soon as pricing and full program details are available.”

Image Credit: Pittsfield Charter Township.



Pittsfield Charter Township

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Website: www.pittsfield-mi.gov

Office of the Supervisor

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

September 24, 2021

Contact: Tina Lloyd, Parks & Recreation Community Coordinator
lloydtd@pittsfield-mi.gov, 734.822.2121

Pittsfield Township Announces Revised Community/Senior Center Hours

Pittsfield Township, MI (September 24, 2021): Starting on October 1, 2021 the Pittsfield Township Parks & Recreation Community/Senior Center, located at 701 W. Ellsworth Road, will close at 4:00 P.M. Tuesday through Friday. Monday hours will remain 8:00 A.M. to 5:00 P.M. Changes to this schedule will be accommodated as and when necessary to meet the needs of Township residents.

This change in hours at the Community Center is designed to meet the dual goals of maximizing staff availability for recreational and senior programming while minimizing redundancies and inefficiencies. During these unprecedented times, the Pittsfield Township Team continues to be creative in identifying solutions such as these to provide for the Gold Standard in Public Service. As we have since the onset of the pandemic, our goal is to provide stellar public services while addressing resource constraints.

If residents have questions or want to provide their input, please contact our team:

Parks & Recreation Contact Information:

Recreation Programs, Special Events, and Pavilion Rentals
734.822.2120 recreation@pittsfield-mi.gov

Senior Programs
734.822.2117 seniors@pittsfield-mi.gov

Farmers Market
734.881.7195 farmersmarket@pittsfield-mi.gov

Parks
734.822.2114 parks@pittsfield-mi.gov

For additional information or questions, please contact lloydtd@pittsfield-mi.gov; 734.822.2121
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Office of the Supervisor

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

September 22, 2021

Contact: Mandy Grewal, Supervisor
grewalm@pittsfield-mi.gov, 734.822.3135

Join us at One of Our Upcoming Public Safety Millage Forums

Pittsfield Township, MI (September 22, 2021): The township will host a series of public forums to provide information, answer questions, and listen to your feedback regarding the Public Safety Millage Request that will appear on the November 2, 2021 ballot. Three forums will be offered in-person and via Zoom. Each venue will have limited capacity to allow for social distancing and masks are required at all in-person meetings.

Each of the public forums will begin at 6:30 PM:

- September 23rd at the Community Center (701 W. Ellsworth Rd)
- October 7th at Carpenter Elementary School (4250 Central Blvd)
- October 14th at Harvest Elementary School (1155 Campus Parkway)
- October 21st Virtual via Zoom

Pittsfield Township, with the third highest population, has one of the lowest tax rates (6.5 mills) in Washtenaw County while being one of only two full-service municipalities providing water, sewer, rubbish, parks and recreation, public safety (police and fire), assessing, and building services.

Township taxes have remained unchanged since November 2009 with the exception of the increase in the 1.95 Public Safety Millage approved by voters in 2011, which is set to expire this year. Instead of a renewal, the Township is requesting approval of a 1 mill increase (for a total of 2.95 mills for public safety) to address the following factors:

1. Back in 2011, the Township didn't know that the recovery from the Great Recession would take nearly an entire decade. In other words, Pittsfield Township did not return to its pre-recession taxable value until 2017 due to Headlee and Proposal A even though our assessed values increased significantly because of the development activity in our community.
2. Due to this slow economic recovery, the Township has operated – over the past decade – within a very constrained fiscal framework. This has required depleting fund reserves, eliminating and reducing the number of public safety personnel, relying more heavily on transfers from the general fund, and applying for grant funds.
3. The 1 mill increase for the next five years will allow Pittsfield to hire more public safety personnel to meet the dual goals of serving a higher population base and doing so within the context of equity and social justice.

4. The request is for 5 years because the current countywide public safety & mental health millage expires in 2026 (5 years). By requesting a 5-year Township public safety millage, we will be able to align with the county's timeline so all future taxes – Township and other – are imposed in context of each other and no one feels like they are being double-taxed for the same service.

Visit the Township website at www.pittsfield-mi.gov/dpsmillage to get more information, review frequently asked questions, and obtain the registration link if you would like to attend the virtual forum.

For more details and information, please visit: www.pittsfield-mi.gov/dpsmillage

If you have any questions, please contact supervisor@pittsfield-mi.gov; 734.822.3135

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