

PUBLIC HEARING, TOWN BOARD, TOWN OF LITTLE FALLS, APRIL 8, 2025-LOCAL LAW #1-2025, EIGHT MONTH SOLAR ENERGY SYSTEMS MORATORIUM

A Public Hearing of the Town of Little Falls on Local Law #1-2025 was held on April 8, 2025 at the town hall commencing at 7:00 with the following members present:

Present: Supervisor Dan Casler
Councilman Anthony Viscomi
Councilman Kevin Sullivan
Councilman Mitch Soules

Absent; Councilman Kirk Schwasnick

Others Present: Town Clerk, Sandra Regan; Town Attorney, Nicholas Macri; Comprehensive Steering Committee members Steve Salamone and Kimberly Pepper and Comprehensive Plan Project Manager, Jordyan Mueller; City of Little Falls Mayor, Debra Kaufman; Creative Outpost's Executive Director, David Warner; Little Falls City resident, Elaine Sperbeck.

-Notice of the hearing was published in the Times Telegram Newspaper on March 20, 2025.

-Supervisor Casler called the hearing to order stating that the purpose of the hearing was to consider adoption of Local Law #1-2025, an eight-month moratorium on solar energy systems.

-Little Falls City resident, Elaine Sperbeck, expressed her concerns about the negative impacts a solar farm could have on the environment and that she was worried about the Little Falls water shed, flooding and water quality. Ms. Sperbeck stated that besides environmental damage, if there's a pilot program, you don't get much money for 30 years.

-Attorney Macri stated that Governor Hochul, in certain circumstances, has taken away Home Rule, which allowed towns, cities and counties to maintain and utilize their property as they saw fit; due to the passage of a new law, the only thing a town, city or county can do is control the aesthetics, decommissioning and the planning of a project that's over a certain amount of megawatts; passing a moratorium can only temporarily halt them, you can't stop them.

-Steering Committee Member, Steve Salamone, stated that he had just found out about this hearing, that according to the comprehensive plan survey, residents want transparency, they want to know what's going on either by email or on the town's website, that people don't buy the newspaper. Mr. Salamone, referring to the survey, asked if the town was going to burn it or abide by it and where the town going with it. Mr. Salamone also stated that there's no way to find out what town positions are open for election.

Supervisor Casler stated that the town is working on improving communication through the website, that there's also civic engagement, people need to be civically engaged, they need to be educated on how things are running in a town, county or city and he thinks it's incumbent on the people that are residents; that the town's not trying to hide anything and is working on getting out information the best we can. Supervisor Casler stated that the town is legally obligated to publish notices of hearings and other things in the town's designated newspaper and asked David Warner, Executive Director of the "Creative Outpost", for his input on this.

Mr. Warner stated that what the state requires is old thinking. They want notices in one daily and one weekly newspaper, they've never considered digital; this thinking is starting to change, there are some areas that don't have any print at all and some newspapers are digital only, so the state is starting to allow them to become the newspaper of record.

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The way the City of Little Falls did it was to designate The Daily Post as a newspaper of record as well as the Times Telegram Newspaper.

Supervisor Casler stated that this is something the board could look into doing. Mr. Warner stated in addition to the Times Telegram the town can send him notices and he'll post them even if the town doesn't designate the Daily Post as a newspaper of record.

City of Little Falls, Mayor Kaufman, stated that they had the same problem, so they added the Daily Post as an official newspaper and it's helped keep people more informed; however, there are still people who will say they didn't see it.

Supervisor Casler stated that the board will look into having better transparency in the future.

-Supervisor Casler asked if there were any further comments for or against said law. There were no further comments.

-All persons desiring to be heard, having been heard, the hearing was closed at 7:18 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Sandra Regan, Town Clerk