THE MARYLAND-NATIONAL CAPITAL PARK AND PLANNING COMMISSION

14741 Governor Oden Bowie Drive
Upper Marlboro, Maryland 20772
www.mncppc.org/pgco

Office of the Chairman
Prince George's County Planning Board

(301) 952-3561

September 12, 2019

Mr. Benjamin Levy
101 Constitution Avenue, N.W.
Suite 525E
Washington, D.C. 20001

RE: StoneMor Cemetery Solar Project
(MR-1908F)

Dear Mr. Levy:

The Prince George's County Planning Board had the opportunity to review the proposed StoneMor Solar Project during its regular meeting on September 12, 2019 and voted to support staff's recommendations listed below. A copy of the staff report is enclosed for your information.

STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS

- The applicant should provide a minimum 20-foot-wide landscape bufferyard with 80 plant units per 100 linear feet of the property line to the east and north, where adjacent to existing residential developed property. All plants should be native species.

- The applicant should replace *Juniperus x pfitzeriana 'Sea Green'* with either *Thuja occidentalis* or *Juniperus virginiana* and increase the minimum planting height of the evergreen tree, to six to eight feet.

- The applicant should seek approval from the Maryland Department of Transportation State Highway Administration to construct a new entrance from Suitland Road.

- Prior to the commencement of construction, the applicant should contact the Prince George's County Fire/EMS Department to request a pre-incident Emergency Plan for their facility to be conducted by the closest station to the site. The pre-incident Emergency Plan will involve establishing points of contact and timely response options, facilitating emergency vehicle access throughout the site, creating a consistent marking protocol for the identification of system components that require special attention during an emergency, and developing appropriate Standard Operating Procedures or Standard Operating Guidelines for addressing on-site emergencies.

- The applicant should design, install and maintain the proposed project to meet all applicable minimum standards set forth in the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) 70: National Electrical Code and all applicable minimum standards appropriate for ground-mounted solar facilities set forth in NFPA 1: Fire Code.

- The applicant should replace the proposed six-foot chain link fence with a faux wrought iron fence enclosing all three areas of the proposed StoneMor Cemetery Solar Project.

If you have any questions, please contact Christine A. Osei at 301-952-3313 or via email at Christine.Osei@ppd.mncppc.org.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth M. Hewlett
Chairman

Enclosure

c: Andree Green Checkley, Planning Director, Office of the Planning Director
Katina Shoulars, Acting Division Chief, Countywide Planning Division
Crystal Hancock, Acting Planning Supervisor, Countywide Planning Division
Christine A. Osei, Planner Coordinator, Countywide Planning Division
Donna J. Brown, Clerk of the Council, Prince George's County Council

The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission
Prince George's County Planning Department
Countywide Planning Division
301-952-3650
Note: Staff reports can be accessed at www.pgplanning.org/planninghome.htm

Mandatory Referral

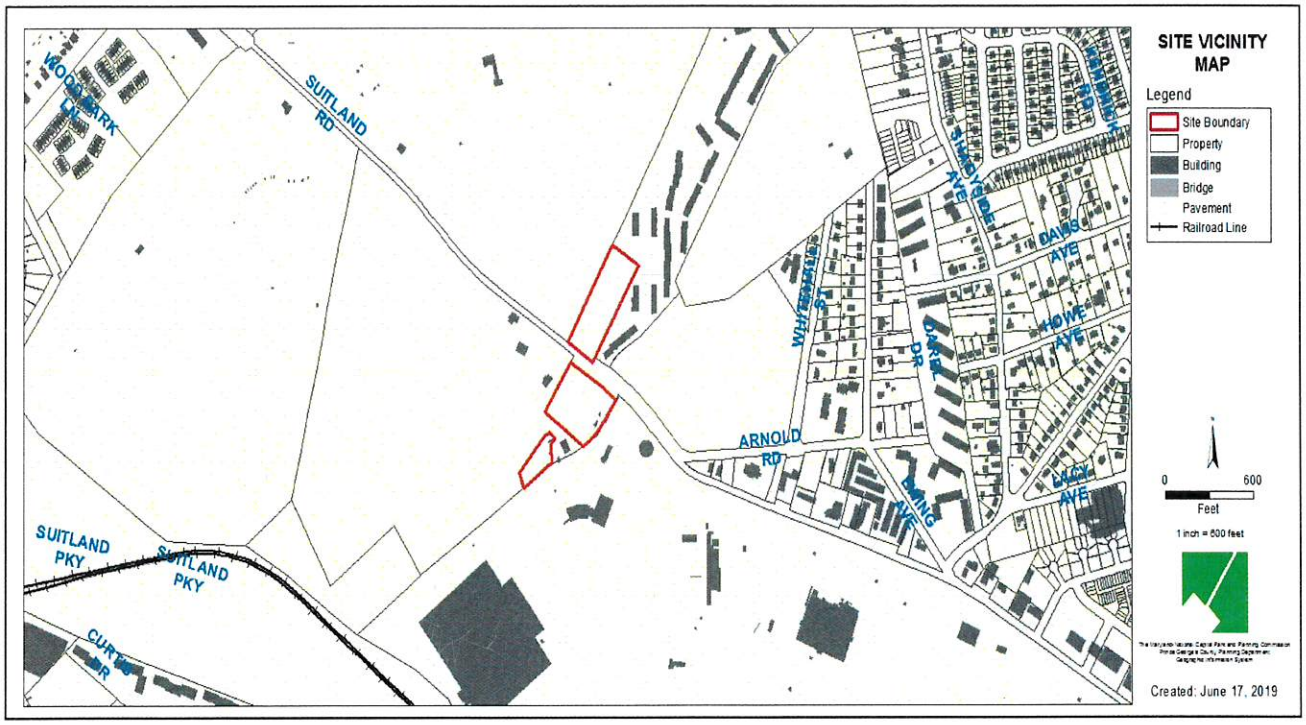
MR-1908F

Application	**General Data**	
Project Name: StoneMor Cemetery Solar Project **Location:** 4111 Pennsylvania Avenue Suitland, Maryland **Applicant/Address:** Ameresco Inc. 101 Constitution Avenue, N.W. Suite 525 East Washington, D.C 20001 **Property Owner:** Ameresco, Inc. Mr. Benjamin Levy SynerGen Community Solar, LLC	**Planning Board Hearing Date:**	9/12/19
	Date Accepted:	5/10/19
	Review Action:	Continued From 6/27/19 – 9/12/19
	Acreage:	134.67-acre site
	Zone:	O-S
	Planning Area:	75A
	Plan 2035 Designation:	Established Communities
	Council District:	District 7
	Municipality:	N/A

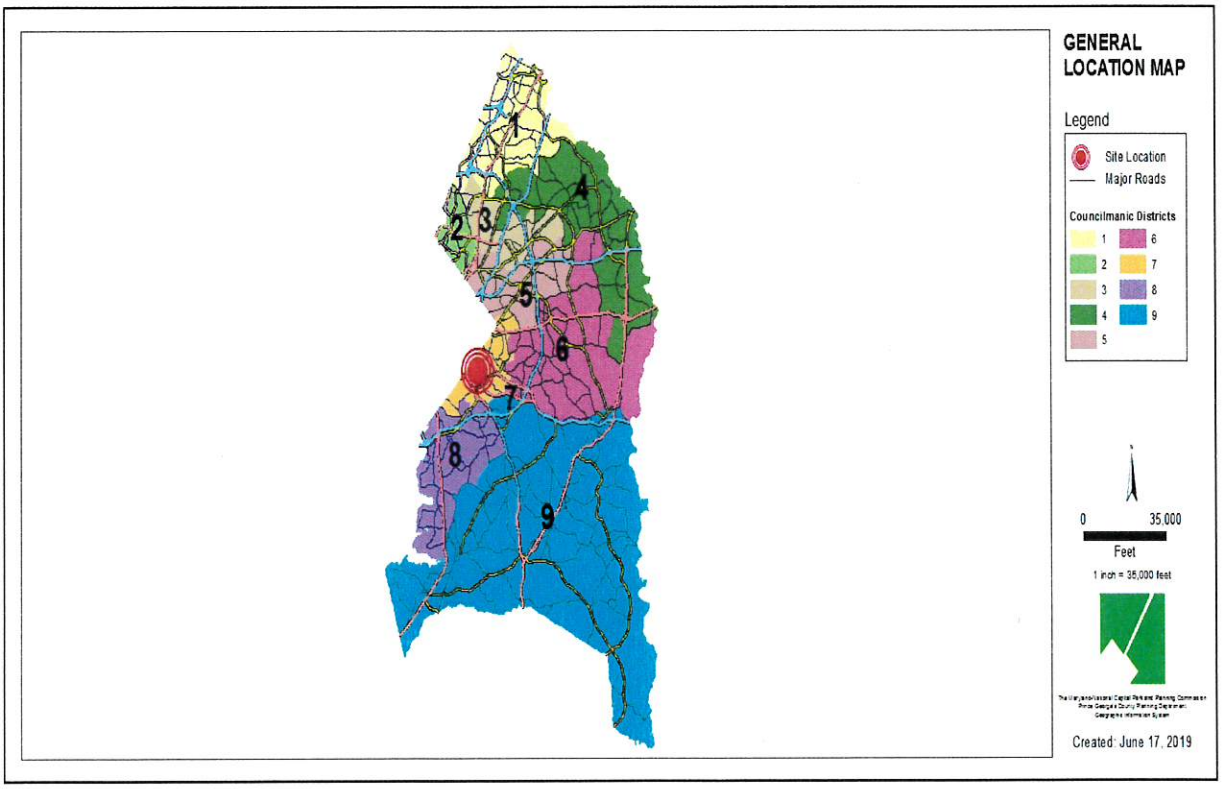
Purpose of Application	**Notice Date:**
The applicant seeks to construct a solar array capable of producing 1000KW to 1400KW in nominal power. The array is to be constructed on a 5.3-acre area site located on the eastern portion of the larger 134.67-acre church owned property which is zoned O-S. The project site is located approximately one mile west of the intersection of Suitland Road and Silver Hill Road in Suitland, Maryland.	**Acceptance Mailing:** July 31, 2019

Staff Recommendation	**Staff Reviewer:**
Transmit Staff Report to: Mr. Benjamin Levy 101 Constitution Avenue, N.W. Suite 525 East Washington, D.C. 20001	Christine A. Osei, Project Manager
	Phone Number: 301-952-3313
	Email: Christine.Osei@ppd.mncppc.org

Map 1 - Project Site



Map 2- General Project Location



THE MARYLAND-NATIONAL CAPITAL PARK AND PLANNING COMMISSION

PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY PLANNING BOARD

STAFF REPORT

Subject: Mandatory Referral (MR-1908F)
StoneMor Cemetery Solar Project

The subject project is being reviewed pursuant to the Land Use Article §§20-301 through 305 of the Maryland Annotated Code and Section 27-294 of the Prince George's County Zoning Ordinance which requires that the Planning Board review public construction projects for all federal, state, county and municipal governments, and publicly and privately-owned utilities through the Mandatory Referral (MR) review process.

The proposed community solar project received approval from the Maryland Public Service Commission (PSC) to participate in the Community Solar Pilot Program. The proposed solar project is exempt from PSC final approval because it is below the 2000KW AC threshold.

PROJECT OVERVIEW

SITE DESCRIPTION

The subject project area is comprised of three properties on or near the eastern edge of StoneMor Cemetery, located at 4111 Pennsylvania Avenue. Suitland Road bisects StoneMor Cemetery into south and north parcels. Parcel 20 is a 2.97-acre parcel, in the Residential Townhouse (R-T) zone, located on the north side of Suitland Road. To the south of Suitland Road is Part of Parcel A, which is 2.36 acres in the Open Space (O-S) Zone. Additional solar panels will be placed to the south of StoneMor Cemetery property (Parel 33) and will replace an existing maintenance storage yard. All three properties are undeveloped but have been previously disturbed and contain open grassed area and trees; however, only Part of Parcel A contains a small area in the southeast corner that meets the criteria of woodland which is proposed to remain. The StoneMor Cemetery is in the Development District Overlay Zone of the 2013 *Approved Southern Green Line Station Area Sector Plan and Sectional Map Amendment.*

BACKGROUND

This site has not previously been reviewed as part of any Development Review application.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The proposed Solar Energy System (SES) constists an array of several panels of phovoltaic (conversion of light energy to an electric current) cells. The cells convert the right amount of sunlight to electricity as singular cells generate a small amount of electrical currant.

The applicant, Ameresco, Inc. is proposing to install 1,400 to 1,700 kilowatt photovoltaic solar arrays on a portion of the existing StoneMor Cemetery without disturbing burial sites. The solar array structures are approximately 7 feet tall with the panels pitched at 10-20 degrees facing south and oriented in east-west running rows, with a separation of approximately 8-9 feet between rows.

This project has been revised since its original submittal to the Planning Board on June 27, 2019. The changes that have occurred include: no woodland clearing, reconfigured solar arrays, and the installation of vegetative buffering along north and south property frontage along Suitland Road.

The applicant has entered into a 25-year lease with the owners of the existing StoneMor Cemetery for the proposed solar arrays on both sides of Suitland Road. The proposed development is located in the vicinity of the

federal government agency: National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and an existing multi-family complex owned by Whitehall Associates. The proposed StoneMor Cemetery Solar Project will cover an area of approximately 2.00 acres on both sides of Suitland Road on the eastern most portion of the cemetery.

The solar array will be connected to the existing power lines running along the south side of Suitland Road. Ground disturbance will be necessary to excavate several 2 to 4-foot-wide trenches for low voltage power cables and for the concrete pad supporting a metal-clad switchgear. H-piles will be driven into the ground every 15-20 feet along each panel row to support the aluminum and galvanized steel racking. The project is designed to generate power for approximately 25 years. The panels will then be decommissioned at the end of their useful life and the site will be returned to its original condition.

PROJECT SCHEDULE/HOURS OF OPERATION

The site will be developed in a single phase requiring four months to complete. There will be approximately two maintenance team visits planned per year. As the weather permits, there may be six to eight visits to mow the grass under and around the solar arrays.

COMMUNITY OUTREACH

Planning Department:

Notification letters were mailed to adjoining property owners and area civic associations. As of this date, no issues have been raised by either group.

Applicant:

The applicant mailed letters to area civic association and adjoining homeowners requesting to meet and discuss the scope of the project. A community meeting was held on July 24, 2019.

PROJECT ANALYSIS

1. COMFORMANCE WITH THE 2018 ADOPTED PRINCE GEORGE'S SOLAR ENERGY SYSTEMS (SES) GUIDELINES for MANDATORY REFERRAL CASES

The proposed solar project is consistent with SES Guidelines regarding Woodland Conservation.

2. CONSISTENCY WITH DEVELOPMENT/REGULATORY STANDARDS

The project is exempt from the requirements of the 2010 Prince George's County Landscape Manual. The Urban Design Section notes that the site would normally be required to demonstrate conformance with the following Sections: 4.2, Requirements for Landscape Strips Along Streets, 4.4 Screening Requirements, 4.7 Buffering Incompatible Uses, and Section 4.9, Sustainable Landscaping Requirements. The Urban Design staff recommends the applicant screen or buffer the solar panels from the adjacent residential uses. Although there are some existing plantings on the adjacent multi-family residential property, staff suggests a minimum 20-foot-wide landscape bufferyard with 80 plant units per 100 linear feet of the property line be provided on the north and east sides of the site north of Suitland Road. In addition, the two sides that are fronting both the south and north sides of Suitland Road, the applicant should provide a landscape strip to screen the solar arrays from the view of Suitland Road. No dimensions have been provided. The landscape strip should be a minimum 10 feet in width. The applicant should replace *Juniperus x pfitzeriana 'Sea Green'* with either *Thuja occidentalis* or *Juniperus virginiana*. The minimum height of the proposed evergreen tree should be six to eight feet at time of planting.

3. CONSISTENCY WITH APPROVED PLANS

This application does not conform with Residential Medium land use recommendations of the 2010 *Approved Subregion 4 Master Plan* for the portion of the application north of Suitland Road. The application conforms to the Open Space land use recommendation of the 2014 *Approved Southern Green Line Station Area Sector Plan* for the portion of the application south of Suitland Road. This application is consistent with the 2014

Plan Prince George's 2035 *Approved General Plan* (Plan 2035) which designates this application in the Established Communities. The vision for the Established Communities is to provide context-sensitive infill and low-to-medium density development and to recommend maintaining and enhancing existing public services, facilities, and infrastructure to ensure that the needs of residents are met. Plan 2035 encourages investment in energy infrastructure and renewable energy and encourages the generation of low-carbon and clean, renewable energy sources.

4. ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

The applicant revised the development plan and addressed the concerns with the removal of woodland. The revised plan showed no impacts on existing woodland within the three proposed solar array areas or the removal of one specimen tree. Based on this revision, the Environmental Planning Section supports the July 2019 proposed solar array locations.

Soils: The subject application was not referred to the Prince George's County Soils Conservation District (SCD) for a soil analysis of the disturbed areas of the project site. The site is an existing cemetery.

5. TRANSPORTATION ASSESSMENT & DRIVEWAY ACCESS

Suitland Road (MD 218) is listed in the 2009 *Approved Master Plan of Transportation* as a master plan collector with a proposed right-of-way of 80 feet and two to four lanes. Though the proposed development will not impact traffic flow along existing Suitland Road, the applicant is to seek access from the Maryland Department of Transportation State Highway Administration.

6. HISTORIC PRESERVATION/ARCHEOLOGY

The proposed solar development will not impact any historic sites, historic resources or known archeological sites. A Phase I Archeology Survey is not recommended.

7. ECONOMIC ASSESSMENT

The new facility will improve the delivery of electricity and give customers an additional choice in purchasing electricity alternative sources such as community Solar Energy Generating System (CSEGS).

8. EXISTING PUBLIC FACILITIES

The proposed project is in Police District III Station, which is located at 7600 Barlow Road in Landover. The Special Projects Section has reviewed this plan for adequacy of fire and rescue services. The Prince George's County Fire and Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Department indicates that a five-minute response time is recognized as the national standard for Fire/EMS response times. This arises from the 2016 Edition of the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) 1710 Standards for the Organization and Deployment of Fire Suppression Operations, Emergency Medical Operations, and Special Operations to the Public by Career Fire Departments. This standard is being applied to the review of non-residential applications. The subject property failed the adequacy test and did not meet the five-minute standard; therefore, staff recommends the following:

- Prior to the commencement of construction, the applicant should contact the Prince George's County Fire/EMS Department to request a pre-incident Emergency Plan for their facility to be conducted by the closest station to the site. The pre-incident Emergency Plan will involve establishing points of contact and timely response options, facilitating emergency vehicle access throughout the site, creating a consistent marking protocol for the identification of system components that require special attention during an emergency, and developing appropriate Standard Operating Procedures or Standard Operating Guidelines for addressing on-site emergencies.

- The applicant should design, install and maintain the proposed project to meet all applicable minimum standards set forth in the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) 70: National Electrical Code and all applicable minimum standards appropriate for ground-mounted solar facilities set forth in NFPA 1: Fire Code.

- Prior to the commencement of construction, the applicant should contact the Prince George's County Fire/EMS Department to request a pre-incident Emergency plan for their facility conducted by the closest station to the site. The pre-incident Emergency Plan will involve establishing points of contact and timely response options, facilitating emergency vehicle access throughout the site, creating a consistent marking protocol for the identification of system components that require special attention during an emergency, and developing appropriate Standard Operating Procedures or Standard Operating Guidelines for addressing on-site emergencies.

- The applicant should design, install and maintain the proposed project to meet all applicable minimum standards set forth in the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) 70: National Electrical Code and all applicable minimum standards appropriate for ground-mounted solar facilities set forth in NFPA 1: Fire Code.

The proposed development application is also served by Police District III Station, which is located at 7600 Barlowe Road in Landover, Maryland. The 2008 *Approved Water and Sewer Plan* places this property in Water and Sewer Categories 6, Individual System.

9. PERMITING AGENCIES

It should be noted that the Mandatory Referral review process does not exempt a project from the need to meet the requirements of any other entitlement process. The subject application will receive final approvals from the Prince George's County Department of Permitting, Inspections and Enforcement (DPIE) and other agencies as outlined below:

1. Prince George's County Planning Department:
    - Natural Resources Inventory (NRI)
    - Woodland Conservation Numbered Letter of Exemption

2. Prince George's County, Soil Conservation District (PGCSCD):
    - Erosion and Sediment Control Permit

3. Prince George's County Department of Permitting, Inspections and Enforcement (DPIE):
    - Site Development (Stormwater Management) Concept
    - Final Stormwater Management Plan Permit
    - Building Permit, Electrical Permit, Fence Permit and Commercial Solar Panel Permit
4. Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE)
5. Maryland Public Service Commission (PSC)
6. Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR)
    - Power Plant Research Program

STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS

Staff supports the location of the proposed solar project with the recommendations outlined below:

- The applicant should provide a minimum 20-foot-wide landscape bufferyard with 80 plant units per 100 linear feet of the property line to the east and north, where adjacent to existing residential developed property. All plants should be native species.

- The applicant should replace *Juniperus x pfitzeriana 'Sea Green'* with either *Thuja occidentalis* or *Juniperus virginiana* and increase the minimum planting height of the evergreen tree, to six to eight feet.

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