



House of Representatives

General Assembly

File No. 767

January Session, 2015

Substitute House Bill No. 6435

House of Representatives, May 7, 2015

The Committee on Planning and Development reported through REP. MILLER, P. of the 36th Dist., Chairperson of the Committee on the part of the House, that the substitute bill ought to pass.

AN ACT STREAMLINING THE PERMITTING PROCESS FOR RESIDENTIAL SOLAR PHOTOVOLTAIC SYSTEMS.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Assembly convened:

1 Section 1. (NEW) (*Effective October 1, 2015*) (a) As used in this
2 section:

3 (1) "Residential solar photovoltaic system" means equipment and
4 devices that have the primary purpose of collecting solar energy and
5 generating electricity by photovoltaic effect, have a nameplate capacity
6 rating of twelve kilowatts or less, are installed on the roof of a single-
7 family or multifamily home, conform to the National Electrical Code
8 and State Building and Fire Safety Codes and do not exceed the
9 maximum building height authorized by the municipality where such
10 home is situated;

11 (2) "Municipality" means any town, city, borough, consolidated
12 town and city or consolidated town and borough;

13 (3) "Permit" means a permit to install and interconnect a residential
14 solar photovoltaic system to the electric grid;

15 (4) "Permit applicant" means a natural person or household seeking
16 a permit to install a residential solar photovoltaic system;

17 (5) "Inspection" means a structural, electrical and fire safety
18 inspection of the permit applicant's residential solar photovoltaic
19 system; and

20 (6) "Electronic submission" means the act of a permit applicant who
21 submits his or her completed application to a municipality for review
22 by means of electronic mail, facsimile or electronic application
23 available on a municipality's Internet web site.

24 (b) Not later than January 1, 2016, each municipality shall develop a
25 permitting process for residential solar photovoltaic systems or, if
26 applicable, amend the municipality's current permitting process in
27 accordance with subsections (c) and (d) of this section. Each
28 municipality may (1) develop and post on the municipality's Internet
29 web site a permit application for the installation of a residential solar
30 photovoltaic system, (2) allow for electronic submission of such
31 application, and (3) exempt such system from payment of permit fees
32 pursuant to subsection (c) of section 29-263 of the general statutes.

33 (c) Not more than thirty days after receipt of a permit application, a
34 municipality shall inform such permit applicant whether such
35 application is approved or disapproved. Review of the permit
36 application shall be limited to whether the residential solar
37 photovoltaic system meets all municipal, state and federal health and
38 safety requirements.

39 (d) Not more than thirty days after the installation of a residential
40 solar photovoltaic system, a municipality shall inspect such system.
41 Such municipality may contract with a third-party contractor to
42 perform such inspections. Such contractor shall have a current
43 Connecticut PV-1 limited solar electric contractor license. The

44 municipality shall disclose on its permit application whether it
 45 contracts with a third-party contractor to perform the inspection and
 46 the cost of such inspection. Not more than one inspection shall be
 47 required for each residential solar photovoltaic system, unless a health
 48 or safety issue is detected during the inspection of such system. A
 49 municipality may perform a separate fire safety inspection if deemed
 50 necessary by the municipality. If the municipality or a third-party
 51 contractor performing such inspection makes a finding that a
 52 residential solar photovoltaic system does not meet municipal, state or
 53 federal health and safety requirements, such municipality may require
 54 the permit applicant to apply for a special use permit.

55 (e) Nothing in this section shall authorize any person to cause any
 56 home or structure located within a historic district established
 57 pursuant to section 7-147b of the general statutes to be altered, as
 58 defined in section 7-147a of the general statutes.

59 (f) Not later than December 1, 2015, the Connecticut Green Bank
 60 shall plan, implement and host at least one residential solar
 61 photovoltaic system permit training seminar for the purpose of
 62 providing guidance and information to municipalities seeking to
 63 develop a permitting process in accordance with this section. The
 64 Connecticut Green Bank may consult with and invite the Connecticut
 65 Conference of Municipalities, the Connecticut Council of Small Towns,
 66 the Renewable Energy and Efficiency Business Association and any
 67 other organization or representative of such organization to participate
 68 in the planning and implementation of the training seminar.

This act shall take effect as follows and shall amend the following sections:		
Section 1	October 1, 2015	New section

PD *Joint Favorable Subst.*

The following Fiscal Impact Statement and Bill Analysis are prepared for the benefit of the members of the General Assembly, solely for purposes of information, summarization and explanation and do not represent the intent of the General Assembly or either chamber thereof for any purpose. In general, fiscal impacts are based upon a variety of informational sources, including the analyst's professional knowledge. Whenever applicable, agency data is consulted as part of the analysis, however final products do not necessarily reflect an assessment from any specific department.

OFA Fiscal Note**State Impact:** None**Municipal Impact:** None**Explanation**

The bill requires municipalities to develop or amend their permitting process to allow residential property owners to install and interconnect solar panels.

The bill has no fiscal impact, as it is anticipated that municipalities already have such permitting processes in place.

The Out Years**State Impact:** None**Municipal Impact:** None

OLR Bill Analysis**sHB 6435*****AN ACT STREAMLINING THE PERMITTING PROCESS FOR RESIDENTIAL SOLAR PHOTOVOLTAIC SYSTEMS.*****SUMMARY:**

By January 1, 2016, this bill requires each municipality to develop a permitting process, or amend an existing permitting process, to allow residential property owners to install and interconnect solar photovoltaic (PV) systems to the electric grid. The bill requires municipalities to:

1. approve or disapprove of a residential solar PV system permit within 30 days of receiving an application to install one;
2. limit their review of an application to whether the system meets municipal, state, and federal health and safety requirements; and
3. inspect the systems within 30 days of installation.

The bill limits, with certain exceptions, the number of inspections municipalities may require and allows municipalities to issue special use permits for systems that do not meet certain requirements.

The bill also requires the Connecticut Green Bank to implement a residential solar PV system permit training seminar for municipalities seeking to develop a permitting process.

The bill specifies that its provisions do not authorize anyone to alter homes or structures in historic districts. It defines “municipality” as any town, city, borough, consolidated town and city, or consolidated town and borough.

EFFECTIVE DATE: October 1, 2015

RESIDENTIAL SOLAR PHOTOVOLTAIC SYSTEMS

Under the bill, a residential solar PV system is equipment and devices that:

1. collect solar energy and generate electricity by photovoltaic effect,
2. have a nameplate capacity rating of 12 kilowatts or less,
3. are installed on the roof of a single-family or multifamily home,
4. conform to the National Electrical Code and State Building and Fire Safety codes, and
5. do not exceed the maximum building height authorized by the municipality where the home is situated.

PERMITTING PROCESS AND REVIEW

Under the bill, permit applicants are people or households seeking a permit to install a residential solar PV system. The bill allows a municipality, when developing a permitting process, to:

1. develop and post the permit application on its website for the installation of a residential solar photovoltaic system;
2. allow applicants to submit the applications electronically (i.e., by means of email, fax, or an electronic application available on its website); and
3. exempt such systems from the education fee assessed on building permit applications to construct or alter a building or structure.

INSPECTION

Number of Inspections

The bill prohibits municipalities from requiring more than one

inspection for each residential solar PV system, with certain exceptions. Under the bill, an inspection is a structural, electrical, and fire safety inspection of the permit applicant's residential solar PV system. Municipalities may (1) require additional inspections if they detect a health or safety issue during the initial inspection and (2) perform a separate fire safety inspection if deemed necessary.

Third-Party Contractor

The bill allows municipalities to contract with third-party contractors to perform inspections. The contractors must have current Connecticut PV-1 limited solar electric contractor licenses. The bill requires municipalities to disclose on their permit applications (1) whether they contract with third-party contractors to perform inspections and (2) the cost of such inspections.

Special Use Permits

The bill allows municipalities to require permit applicants to apply for special use permits if an inspection finds that a residential solar PV system does not meet municipal, state, or federal health and safety requirements.

The bill does not define "special use permits" or specify any conditions for approving them.

TRAINING SEMINAR

By December 1, 2015, the bill requires the Connecticut Green Bank to plan, implement, and host at least one residential PV system permit training seminar to provide guidance and information to municipalities seeking to develop a permitting process. The bill allows the Green Bank to consult with and invite other organizations to participate in the planning and implementation of the training seminar, including the (1) Connecticut Conference of Municipalities, (2) Connecticut Council of Small Towns, and (3) Renewable Energy and Efficiency Business Association.

BACKGROUND

Legislative History

The House referred the bill (File 579) to the Planning and Development Committee, which reported a substitute bill that (1) allows municipalities to amend existing permitting processes, (2) requires the Connecticut Green Bank to implement a solar PV system permit training seminar, and (3) specifies that municipalities include cities and boroughs.

COMMITTEE ACTION

Energy and Technology Committee

Joint Favorable Substitute

Yea 23 Nay 0 (03/24/2015)

Planning and Development Committee

Joint Favorable Substitute

Yea 16 Nay 1 (04/28/2015)