

**NOTICE OF HEARING**  
**Proposed Amendment to Zoning Ordinance, Sections 17 & 18**

The Aitkin County Planning Commission will hold a second public hearing on the adoption of amendments to the Aitkin County Zoning Ordinance. The hearing will be conducted on August 21, 2023 at 4:00pm in the Aitkin County Board Room at the Government Center, 307 2<sup>nd</sup> Street NW, Aitkin, MN 56431. The Planning Commission will make a recommendation on the proposed ordinance and ordinance amendments to the County Board of Commissioners, with proposed first reading at the regularly scheduled Board meeting on August 22, 2023 and second reading on September 12, 2023.

**Proposed for amendment is Section 17 (Vacation/Short-Term Rentals-VSTR).** A summary of the proposed changes are as follows: Section 17.01(1)(a) (page 1)-change from 5 year to 3 year Interim Use Permit (IUP). Section 17.01(1)(b) (page 4)-example of annual inspection on 3 year IUP timeline. Section 17.01(1)(d) (page 4)- VSTR allowed on all Natural Environment Lakes (NE) with restrictions for motorized watercraft only allowed on NE lakes with a DNR and/or County improved and maintained public boat access. VSTR on NE lakes without a DNR and/or County improved and maintained public boat access are restricted to non-motorized watercraft to include the following as examples, but not strictly limited to: canoes, kayaks, rafts, sailboats, paddle boards, and paddle boats. Section 17.01(1)(e) (page 4) Applicant, owner, or authorized agent of the VSTR shall be present at the scheduled Planning Commission Meeting. Section 17.04 (1)(c) (page7) – The use of holding tanks for Vacation/Short-Term Rentals shall be permitted providing the Vacation/Short-Term owner fully comply with the Aitkin County Environmental Services staff and application requirements. During application, owner must share the three previous years pumping records, as well as proof of current pumping agreement by a licensed septic pumper. In addition and to provide extra environmental safety, owner shall have installed commercial technology approved by Environmental Services staff. This shall include a remote monitoring system to safeguard against unanticipated septic discharge. Section 17.04 (1)(d) (page 7) – If septic system fails causing an imminent threat to public health, Aitkin County Environmental Services will immediately issue cease & desist order and notify MDH of violation. If owner remains non-compliant, the Aitkin County Planning Commission will review and may revoke permit to operate. In this instance, and upon rectifying the septic system failure, Vacation/Short-Term Rental owner will re-apply for a new IUP to include new fees, inspections, and hearing before the Aitkin County Planning Commission. Section 17.05 (b) (page 9)- Future compliance will be monitored through the regular review of the IUP and annual inspections of the Vacation/Short-Term Rental by Aitkin County Environmental Services. During the annual inspection, the Vacation/Short-Term owner will be assessed a \$100.00 re-inspection fee plus a \$100.00 per bedroom fee with payment due prior to the annual inspection. Non-compliance will be brought before the Aitkin County Planning Commission. Section 17.05 (g) (page 9) - VSTR discovered to have been renting prior to applying for and receiving an IUP, shall be assessed a five (5) times after-the-fact-fee at the time of issuance by Aitkin County Environmental Services. Section 17.06 (a) (page 10) – Appeals from any order, requirement, decision or determination made by the Environmental Services Department or Planning Commission shall first be made to the Board of Adjustment in accordance with Section 10.04 of this ordinance.

**Proposal is adding Section 18 (Solar Energy Systems) to the Aitkin County Zoning Ordinance and includes the following purpose:**

Aitkin County finds that it is in the public interest to encourage the use and development of renewable energy systems that enhance energy conservation efforts, but result in limited adverse impact on nearby properties. As such, the County supports the use of solar energy collection systems. Aitkin County also finds that the development of solar energy systems should be balanced with the protection of the public health, safety and welfare. The County resolves that the following standards shall be adopted to ensure that solar energy systems and Solar Energy Farms can be constructed within Aitkin County while also protecting public safety and the natural resources of the County. Consistent with the Aitkin County Comprehensive Plan, it is the intent of the County with this Section to create standards for the reasonable capture and use, by households, businesses and property owners, of their solar energy resource, and to encourage the development and use of solar energy. The types of solar energy systems regulated by Section 18: Rooftop or other Architecturally-Integrated Solar Energy Systems, Ground-Mount Solar Energy Systems, Community Solar Energy Systems (Solar Gardens/CSES), and Solar Farms.

The above is only a summary; a full text version of the proposals is appended below and available for public review at the Aitkin County Planning and Zoning Office and the Aitkin County Auditor's Office in the Aitkin County Government Center during regular business hours. Comments can be submitted in writing to the Aitkin County Planning and Zoning Office: 307 2<sup>nd</sup> St NW, Rm 219, Aitkin, MN 56431, by facsimile (218) 927-4372, or by e-mail to [aitkinpz@co.aitkin.mn.us](mailto:aitkinpz@co.aitkin.mn.us) before 4:00pm on August 18, 2023. Please include a full name and complete mailing address with all comments. This notice will be published in the Aitkin Independent Age on June 26 and August 2, 2023.

[SECTION 17-Draft 10]

Vacation/Private Home Rental VACATION/SHORT-TERM RENTAL

17.00 Purpose:

It is the purpose and intent of this Section to regulate Vacation/Short-Term Rentals within Aitkin County, to continue the allowed use of Vacation/Short-Term Rentals in Aitkin County, and to mitigate possible adverse impacts to the health, safety, and welfare of surrounding properties and environments.

17.01 ~~Vacation/Private Home Rental~~ Permit Required:

The following standards apply to vacation/private homes renting for thirty (30) days or less except those located within Planned Unit Developments whose legal documents regulate unit rentals.

- A. The owner of a vacation/private home rental must apply for and receive an Interim Use Permit from the County. The initial Interim Use Permit will be valid for ~~three (3) five (5) years and must be renewed before the IUP expiration date, to include an IUP application fee and appearing before the Aitkin County Planning Commission. in order to determine the compliance level of the owner with the conditions of approval. (Go to Page 4)~~

~~For vacation/private home rentals with compliance issues during the initial term of their IUP, subsequent renewals shall be for five (5) years or less as established by the Aitkin County Planning Commission.~~

~~For vacation/private home rentals without any compliance issues during the term of the IUP, subsequent renewals will be through obtaining a Lodging License from Aitkin County Environmental Services Department and future compliance will be monitored through the licensing and inspection. All existing IUP requirements and ordinance performance standards remain in effect. The conditions in Appendix D must be complied with during the lodging license period(s). Termination of the IUP will be when there is a change in ownership of the vacation/private home rental property; or if compliance issues occur during the lodging license period, the IUP may be revoked or amended after a hearing before the Planning Commission. If the IUP is revoked the lodging license will be terminated.~~

- (1) ~~The application for an Interim Use Permit shall include: (Moved to 17.03-Application Requirements)~~
  - a. ~~All information required for a conditional use permit,~~
  - b. ~~Floor plan of the structure drawn to scale, including the number of bedrooms with dimensions and all other sleeping accommodations, smoke detector and carbon monoxide detector locations,~~

- ~~e. A to-scale site plan which shows locations and dimensions of property lines, the structure intended for licensing, accessory structures, parking areas, shore recreational facilities (docking plan, fire pit area, swim beach, etc) and sewage treatment systems.~~
- ~~d. Emergency contact information (police, fire, hospital, septic tank pumper) be posted in the home.~~
- ~~e. Current compliance inspection on the septic system.~~
- ~~f. Current water test from an accredited laboratory with test results for nitrate-nitrogen and coliform bacteria.~~
- ~~g. Plan for garbage disposal.~~
- ~~h. Applicant must submit a pet policy.~~
- ~~i. In each bedroom and any room used for sleeping, show the dimensions of egress windows on the drawing and the style (double hung, sliding or casement).~~
- ~~j. Provide a detailed list of all advertising sources pertaining to the vacation/private home rental and notify Environmental Services with any changes to the advertising within 30 days.~~

- ~~(2) The occupancy (overnight occupants) of a vacation/private home rental shall be limited to no more than two (2) persons per bedroom (see #7 below for allowable number of occupants per bedroom) plus two (2) additional persons per building, or no more than one (1) person for every seventy five (75) gallons of water per day that the building subsurface sewage treatment system (SSTS) is designed to handle, whichever is less. The maximum number of occupants, including both overnight and non-overnight occupants, shall not exceed twice the approved overnight occupants. (Moved to 17.04-Occupancy)~~
- ~~(3) The vacation/private home rental shall be connected to an approved SSTS. The SSTS shall be designed and constructed with a design flow of seventy-five (75) gallons of water per person per day to handle the maximum number of guests for which the facility is permitted. The SSTS shall include a flow measuring device. Flow measurement readings and monitoring of the SSTS shall be recorded monthly and records shall be made available to the Department upon request. The use of holding tanks for vacation/private home rental units shall be prohibited. (Moved to 17.04-Septic)~~
- ~~(4) On-site parking shall be provided which is sufficient to accommodate the occupants of the vacation/private home rental. Public streets and septic systems may not be used for calculating parking by renters or guests. Parking areas must be setback a minimum distance of five (5) feet from the property lines.~~
- ~~(5) Attempting to obtain additional occupancy by use of recreational vehicles, tents, accessory structures or fish houses is prohibited.~~
- ~~(6) Rooms used for sleeping shall be provided with egress windows that comply with the Minnesota State Building Code and with smoke detectors in locations that comply~~

- with MN Statute chapter 299F or the requirements of the Department, whichever is more restrictive. Every room occupied for sleeping purposes by one person shall contain at least 70 square feet of usable floor space, and every room occupied for sleeping purposes by more than one person shall contain not less than 60 square feet of usable floor space for each occupant thereof. Carbon monoxide detectors shall be installed in locations that comply with MN Statute section 299F.51 (moved to 17.04-Occupancy)
- (7) On premise advertising signs are prohibited.
- (8) The owner shall provide a visual demarcation of the property lines.
- (9) The owner shall keep a report, detailing use of the home by recording the full name, address, phone number and vehicle license number of guests using the property. A copy of the report shall be provided to the Department upon request.
- (10) —No more than two (2) vacation/private home rentals will be allowed on a parcel. More than two (2) vacation/private home rentals on the same parcel or on contiguous parcels under common ownership shall constitute a resort and must meet the standards set forth in Section 15 and/or 16 of this ordinance and Section 7 of the Aitkin County Shoreland Management Ordinance.
- (11) The Planning Commission may impose conditions that will reduce the impacts of the proposed use on neighboring properties, public services, and nearby water bodies as well as other concerns including, but not limited to, public safety, and safety of guests. Said conditions may include but not be limited to —fencing or vegetative screening, native buffer along the shoreline, noise standards, duration of permit, restrictions as to the docking of watercraft, and number of guests. (Moved 17.04-Other Regulations)
- (12) —A vacation/private home rental shall be licensed by the County and shall meet the requirements of all statutes, rules, regulations, and ordinances including, but not limited to, Aitkin County’s Lodging Ordinance, if applicable.
- (13) —The Planning Commission may impose noise standards in order to assist in reducing potential impacts on neighboring properties.
- (14) —Websites and all other advertising of the rental property must be in compliance with the occupancy allowance and all other conditions per approved Application.
- (15) —Vacation/private home rentals may not be rented or leased to more than one separate party in a seven day period, unless licensed to do so by the Aitkin County Environmental Services Department (MN Statute Chapter 157).
- (16) —The applicant/owner shall keep on file with the County Environmental Services Department the name and telephone number of a contact person who shall be responsible for responding to questions or concerns regarding the operation of the

~~vacation/private home rental. This information must be kept current. This information shall also be posted in a conspicuous location within the dwelling unit. The contact person must be available to accept telephone calls on a 24 hour basis at all times that the vacation/private homes is rented and occupied. The contact person must have a key to the vacation/private home rental and be able to respond to the vacation/private home rental within 60 minutes to address issues or must have arranged for another person to address issues within the same timeframe. (Moved-17.04 Property Contact Information)~~

- (17) ~~Each vacation rental must have a property information handbook available for renters that includes the name and contact information for the owner and/or caretaker; quiet hours as per approved IUP; maximum number of overnight occupants; maximum number of non-overnight occupants; property rules related to the use of outdoor features such as decks, patios, fire pit, sauna and other recreational facilities; list of the conditions that were placed on the approved IUP; and a notice that all ordinances and IUP conditions will be enforced by the Aitkin County Sheriff's Office and the Aitkin County Environmental Services Department. (Moved-17.04 Property Contact Information)~~
- B. All existing Vacation/Short-Term Rentals prior to this enactment will require annual inspections (see 17.05 (b-c) from Aitkin County Environmental Services within the month they were permitted. Subsequent three (3) year IUP renewals will begin the year their current IUP expires and will be subject to this amendment and Ordinance. All new Vacation/Short-Term Rentals as of the enactment date of this Ordinance shall obtain a permit from the County prior to commencing operations. All Vacation/Short-Term Rentals shall reapply for an IUP every three (3) years, or as determined by the Planning Commission. An example is as follows: 2024-IUP issued, 2025-annual inspection, 2026-annual inspection, 2027-IUP issued, etc.
- C. Vacation/Short-Term Rentals are allowed in all five zoning classifications found in Appendix A of this General Zoning Ordinance. Vacation/Short-Term Rentals are allowed on General Development (GD) and Recreational Development (RD) lakes in Aitkin County.
- D. Vacation/Short-Term Rentals are allowed on Natural Environmental (NE) Lakes and will be regulated by the conditions imposed by the Aitkin County Planning Commission. Guests of Vacation/Short-Term Rentals with motorized watercraft will be allowed on NE Lakes providing there is a DNR and/or County improved and maintained public boat access. Guests of Vacation/Short-Term on NE Lakes without a DNR and/or County improved and maintained public boat access will be restricted to non-motorized watercraft to include the following as an examples, but not strictly limited to: canoes, kayaks, rafts, sailboats, paddle boards, and paddle boats.

E. Applicant, owner, or authorized agent of the Vacation/Short-Term Rental shall be present at the scheduled Planning Commission Meeting.

F. Termination of the IUP will be when there is a change in ownership of the Vacation/Short-Term Rental property.

#### 17.02 Lodging License:

A. For all Vacation/Short-Term Rentals renting for time periods of less than 7 days, a lodging license through the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) shall be required, as defined by Minnesota State Statute 157.

B. If applicable, the owner of any Vacation/Short Term Rental shall demonstrate issuance of a yearly lodging license from the MDH. These shall be provided to Aitkin County Environmental Services upon request.

#### 17.03 Application Requirements:

A. The application for an Interim Use Permit shall include **at a minimum:**

- 1) All information required for a Conditional Use Permit.
- 2) Floor plan of the structure drawn to scale, including the number of bedrooms with dimensions and all other sleeping accommodations, smoke detector and carbon monoxide detector locations. In each bedroom and any room used for sleeping purposes, show the dimensions of egress windows on the drawing and the style (double hung, sliding, or casement).
- 3) A to-scale site plan of the property which details the locations and dimensions of all property lines, the structure intended for licensing, accessory structures, parking areas, shore recreational facilities (docking plan, fire pit area, swim beach, etc.) and sewage treatment systems.
- 4) ~~Current compliance inspection~~ A certificate of compliance on the septic system **less than three (3) years old or a certificate of installation less than five (5) years old.**
- 5) A current water test taken from an accredited laboratory ~~with test results for nitrate-nitrogen and coliform bacteria~~ within 1 year prior to application submission, with passing results for nitrate-nitrogen and coliform bacteria. **(Note: MDH must also approve drinking water supply and well standards in accordance with MN Administrative Rules Chapters 4720 and 4725).**

- 6) Emergency contact information shall be posted (police, fire, hospital, septic tank pumper) be posted in the home in a conspicuous place inside the Vacation/Short-Term Rental.
- 7) If Vacation/Short-Term Rental is located on a lake, information and map shall be provided with DNR public access location. A current recreational vehicle handbook shall also be provided at all Vacation/Short-Term Rentals. These items can be found online, through the DNR, and/or through the Aitkin County Licensing Center.
- 8) A contact person shall be designated and contact information be provided to Aitkin County Environmental Services at the time of application.
- 9) ~~Plan for garbage disposal~~ A solid waste and recycling plan including the name of the Aitkin County licensed garbage hauler and frequency of garbage service.
- 10) Applicant must submit a pet policy.
- 11) Provide a ~~detailed~~ list of all advertising sources pertaining to the Vacation/Short-Term Rental and notify Environmental Services with any changes to the advertising within 30 days.

B. After a complete application is submitted and prior to the approval of the IUP, Aitkin County Environmental Services shall inspect (interior/exterior) proposed Vacation/Short-Term Rental to determine compliance with the requirements of this ordinance.

C. Prior to approval of the Interim Use Permit, the owner shall provide a visual demarcation of the property lines to include a vegetative or man-made property marker.

~~D. The occupancy (overnight occupants) of a vacation/private home rental shall be limited to no more than two (2) persons per bedroom (see #7 below for allowable number of occupants per bedroom) plus two (2) additional persons per building, or no more than one (1) person for every seventy-five (75) gallons of water per day that the building subsurface sewage treatment system (SSTS) is designed to handle, whichever is less. The maximum number of occupants, including both overnight and non-overnight occupants, shall not exceed twice the approved overnight occupants.~~  
(Moved to Occupancy in 17.04)

~~E. The vacation/private home rental shall be connected to an approved SSTS. The SSTS shall be designed and constructed with a design flow of seventy-five (75) gallons of water per person per day to handle the maximum number of guests for which the facility is permitted. The SSTS shall include a flow measuring device. Flow~~



~~measurement readings and monitoring of the SSTS shall be recorded monthly and records shall be made available to the Department upon request. The use of holding tanks for vacation/private home rental units shall be prohibited.~~

(Moved to Septic/Solid Waste in 17.04)

#### 17.04 General Requirements:

##### A. Septic/Solid Waste:

- 1) The Vacation/ Short-Term Rental shall be connected to an approved Subsurface Septic Treatment System (SSTS). The SSTS shall be designed and constructed with a design flow of seventy-five (75) gallons of water per person per day to handle the maximum number of guests for which the facility is permitted.
- 2) The SSTS shall include a flow measuring device. Flow measurement readings and monitoring of the SSTS shall be recorded monthly and records shall be made available to the Aitkin County Environmental Services on a yearly basis, or upon request. ~~Installed flow measuring device will be verified by Environmental Services Department staff before issuing permit to operate the Vacation/Short-Term Rental.~~
- 3) ~~The use of holding tanks for Vacation/Short-Term Rentals shall be permitted providing the Vacation/Short-Term owner fully comply with the Aitkin County Environmental Services staff and application requirements. During application, owner must share the three previous years pumping records, as well as proof of current pumping agreement by a licensed septic pumper. In addition and to provide extra environmental safety, owner shall have installed commercial technology approved by Environmental Services staff. This shall include a remote monitoring system to safeguard against unanticipated septic discharge.~~
- 4) ~~If septic system fails causing an imminent threat to public health, Aitkin County Environmental Services will immediately issue cease & desist order and notify MDH of violation. If owner remains non-compliant, the Aitkin County Planning Commission will review and may revoke permit to operate. In this instance, and upon rectifying the septic system failure, Vacation/Short-Term Rental owner will re-apply for a new IUP to include new fees, inspections, and hearing before the Aitkin County Planning Commission.~~

##### B. Occupancy:

- 1) The occupancy (overnight occupants) of a Vacation/Short-Term Rental shall be limited to no more than two (2) persons per bedroom (see (4) below for

allowable number of occupants per bedroom) plus two (2) additional persons per building, or no more than one (1) person for every seventy-five (75) gallons of water per day that the building subsurface sewage treatment system (SSTS) is designed to handle, whichever is less.

- 2) The maximum number of occupants, including both overnight and non-overnight occupants, shall not exceed twice the approved overnight guests.
- 3) Attempting to obtain additional occupancy by use of recreational vehicles, tents, accessory structures or fish houses is prohibited.
- 4) Rooms used for sleeping shall be provided with egress windows that comply with the Minnesota State Building Code and with smoke detectors in locations that comply with MN Statute chapter 299F. Every room occupied for sleeping purposes by one person shall contain at least 70 square feet of usable floor space, and every room occupied for sleeping purposes by more than one person shall contain not less than 60 square feet of usable floor space for each occupant thereof. Carbon monoxide detectors shall be installed in locations that comply with MN Statute section 299F.51.
- 5) No more than two (2) Vacation/Short-Term Rentals will be allowed on a parcel. More than two (2) Vacation/Short-Term Rentals on the same parcel or on contiguous parcels under common ownership shall constitute a resort and must meet the standards set forth in Section 15 and/or 16 of this ordinance and Section 7 of the Aitkin County Shoreland Management Ordinance.

#### C. Parking:

- 1) On-site parking shall be provided which is sufficient to accommodate the occupants of the Vacation/Short-Term Rental. Public streets and septic systems may not be used for calculating parking by renters or guests. **Off-street parking shall be provided with a minimum of one space per bedroom and one space for the Vacation/Short-Term Rental operator. Parking cannot restrict access by emergency vehicles of the traveling public and shall not impede any ingress or egress of the property owner. No parking shall be allowed on the roadway or within the road right-of-way.**
- 2) Parking areas shall meet property line setbacks when feasible, but shall not be less than five (5) feet from the property lines.

#### D. Property Contact Information:

- 1) The applicant/owner shall keep on file with Aitkin County Environmental Services, the name and telephone number of a contact person who shall be responsible for responding to questions or concerns regarding the operation of the Vacation/Short-Term Rental. ~~This information must be kept current~~ **Aitkin**

County Environmental Services will ensure annually that all information is kept current. This information shall also be posted in a conspicuous location within the dwelling unit. The contact person must be available to accept telephone calls on a 24-hour basis at all times that the Vacation/Short-Term Rental is rented and occupied. The contact person must have a key to the Vacation/Short-Term Rental and be able to respond to the Vacation/Short-Term Rental within 60 minutes to address issues or must have arranged for another person to address issues within the same timeframe.

- 2) Each Vacation/Short-Term Rental must have a property information handbook available for renters that includes the name and contact information for the owner and/or caretaker; quiet hours as per approved IUP; maximum number of overnight occupants; maximum number of non-overnight occupants; property rules related to the use of outdoor features such as decks, patios, fire pit, sauna and other recreational facilities; list of the conditions that were placed on the approved IUP; and a notice that all ordinances and IUP conditions will be enforced by the Aitkin County Sheriff's Office and Aitkin County Environmental Services.
- 3) The owner shall keep a report dating back one year, detailing the use of the Vacation/Short-Term Rental by recording the full name, address, and vehicle license number of guests using the property. A copy of the report shall be provided to Aitkin County Environmental Services upon request and in accordance with MN Statutes 327.10.

E. Advertising:

- 1) Websites and all other advertising of the rental property must be in compliance with the occupancy allowance and all other conditions per approved application. Environmental Services staff will regularly monitor online advertising to ensure Vacation/Short-Term Rental is complying with conditions agreed upon for IUP.
- 2) On premise advertising signs are prohibited.

F. Other Regulations:

- 1) The Planning Commission may impose conditions that will reduce the impacts of the proposed use on neighboring properties, public services, and nearby water bodies as well as other concerns including, but not limited to, public safety and safety of guests. Said conditions may include, but not be limited to: fencing or vegetative screening, native buffer along the shoreline, noise standards, duration of permit, restrictions as to the docking of watercraft, and number of guests.

#### 17.05 Enforcement/Violations:

- A. For Vacation/Short-Term Rentals with compliance issues during the term of their IUP, investigations will be conducted by Aitkin County Environmental Services, and information will be gathered for the future consideration by the Aitkin County Planning Commission for subsequent renewals.
- B. Future compliance will be monitored through the regular review of the IUP and annual inspections of the Vacation/Short-Term Rental by Aitkin County Environmental Services. During the annual inspection, the Vacation/Short-Term owner will be assessed a \$100.00 re-inspection fee plus a \$100.00 per bedroom fee with payment due prior to the annual inspection. Non-compliance will be brought before the Aitkin County Planning Commission.
- C. The conditions imposed by the Aitkin County Planning Commission and agreed upon by the Vacation/Short-Term Rental owner must be complied with during the term of the IUP.
- D. If substantiated complaints/violations have occurred during the term of the IUP, the IUP may be subject to a revocation hearing before the Aitkin County Planning Commission.
- E. If the IUP is revoked, MDH will be notified and the lodging license will be terminated.
- F. Any person, firm or corporation, or agent, employees or contractors of such, who violate, disobey, omit, neglect, refuse to comply with, or who resist enforcement of any of the provisions of Section 17 may be subject to the forfeiture of their IUP. Violations of Section 17 shall be deemed a misdemeanor. Each day that a violation continues to exist shall constitute a separate offense.
- G. Vacation/Short-Term Rentals discovered to have been renting prior to applying for and receiving an IUP, shall be assessed a five (5) times after-the-fact-fee at the time of issuance by Aitkin County Environmental Services.
- H. Any Vacation/Short-Term Rental operating without a permit as of the enactment date of this Ordinance, has 90 days to comply.

#### 17.06 Appeals:

Appeals from any order, requirement, decision or determination made by the Environmental Services Department or Planning Commission shall first be made to the Board of Adjustment in accordance with Section 10.04 of this ordinance.

(All below is in above language)

- (18) ~~On premise advertising signs are prohibited.~~
- (19) ~~The owner shall provide a visual demarcation of the property lines.~~
- (20) ~~The owner shall keep a report, detailing use of the home by recording the full name, address, phone number and vehicle license number of guests using the property. A copy of the report shall be provided to the Department upon request.~~
- (21) ~~No more than two (2) vacation/private home rentals will be allowed on a parcel. More than two (2) vacation/private home rentals on the same parcel or on contiguous parcels under common ownership shall constitute a resort and must meet the standards set forth in Section 15 and/or 16 of this ordinance and Section 7 of the Aitkin County Shoreland Management Ordinance.~~
- (22) ~~The Planning Commission may impose conditions that will reduce the impacts of the proposed use on neighboring properties, public services, and nearby water bodies as well as other concerns including, but not limited to, public safety, and safety of guests. Said conditions may include but not be limited to—fencing or vegetative screening, native buffer along the shoreline, noise standards, duration of permit, restrictions as to the docking of watercraft, and number of guests.~~
- (23) ~~A vacation/private home rental shall be licensed by the County and shall meet the requirements of all statutes, rules, regulations, and ordinances including, but not limited to, Aitkin County's Lodging Ordinance, if applicable.~~
- (24) ~~The Planning Commission may impose noise standards in order to assist in reducing potential impacts on neighboring properties.~~
- (25) ~~Websites and all other advertising of the rental property must be in compliance with the occupancy allowance and all other conditions per approved Application.~~
- (26) ~~Vacation/private home rentals may not be rented or leased to more than one separate party in a seven day period, unless licensed to do so by the Aitkin County Environmental Services Department (MN Statute Chapter 157).~~

**[SECTION 18]**

**SOLAR ENERGY SYSTEMS**

18.0 Purpose:

Aitkin County finds that it is in the public interest to encourage the use and development of renewable energy systems that enhance energy conservation efforts, but result in limited adverse impact on nearby properties. As such, the County supports the use of solar energy collection systems. Aitkin County also finds that the development of solar energy systems should be balanced with the protection of the public health, safety and welfare. The County resolves that the following standards shall be adopted to ensure that solar energy systems and Solar Energy Farms can be constructed within Aitkin County while also protecting public safety and the natural resources of the County. Consistent with the Aitkin County Comprehensive Plan, it is the intent of the County with this Section to create standards for the reasonable capture and use, by households, businesses and property owners, of their solar energy resource, and to encourage the development and use of solar energy.

18.01 Applicability:

These regulations shall apply to all solar energy systems producing less than 50 megawatts of power on properties and structures under the jurisdiction of Aitkin County Planning & Zoning. Aitkin County shall refer any application for a large electric power generating plant (LEPGP) to the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission (MN PUC) for approval. A LEPPG shall be defined as any solar energy system capable of producing more than 50 megawatts of power. All solar energy systems shall abide by all state applicable codes.

18.02 Types of Solar Energy Systems:

The following types of solar energy systems shall be regulated by this Section:

- A. Rooftop or other Architecturally-Integrated Solar Energy Systems: Systems which are accessory to the principal land use, designed to supply energy for the principal use. Rooftop or other architecturally-integrated systems shall be regulated as follows:

- 1) Rooftop or other architecturally-integrated systems are permitted accessory uses in all districts in which buildings and structures are permitted.

- 2) A building permit is required before installing a rooftop or other architecturally-integrated solar energy system.
- 3) Commercial rooftop or other architecturally-integrated systems shall blend into design of the building.

B. Ground-Mount Solar Energy Systems: Systems which are accessory to the principal use and designed to supply energy for the principal use. Ground-mount systems shall be regulated as follow:

- 1) Ground-mount are permitted accessory uses in all districts in which buildings and structures are permitted and require a building permit.
- 2) Ground-mount systems shall be subject to the accessory use standards for the district in which they are located, including dimensional standards, such as yard setbacks, and that ground mount systems must meet the structure setback for the particular zone that the system is located on.
- 3) The height of the ground-mounted components shall not exceed 15 feet.
- 4) No ground-mounted solar energy system shall cover or encompass more than the allotted total impervious percent of the property area or lot size for the particular zone.
- 5) No Ground-mount systems are permitted within Short Impact Zones.

C. Community Solar Energy Systems (Solar Gardens/CSES): Applicants of Roof or ground-mount CSES's designed to supply energy for off-site users on the distribution grid (but not for the export to the wholesale market or connection to the electric transmission grid) shall apply for and receive an Interim Use Permit (IUP). The IUP will be valid for five (5) years and must be renewed before the IUP expiration date, to include an application fee and appearing before the Aitkin County Planning Commission. CSES's will be allowed as a principal or accessory permitted use, in all districts unless otherwise regulated or prohibited in this Section:

- 1) Community Solar Energy Systems shall be located on parcels of land no less than five acres in size;
- 2) Prohibited Districts: The County prohibits CSES's within the following zoning district of Shoreland, designated wetlands areas, and within 600 feet of areas designated or formally protected from development by Federal, State, or County Agencies as wildlife habitat, wildlife management areas or designated as National Wild and Scenic land or corridor;

- 3) All CSES's and CSES components must meet the setback, height and coverage limitations (impervious surface) for the zoning district in which the system is located;
- 4) CSES's shall require a building permit, and are subject to the accessory use standards for the zoning district in which they are located;
- 5) Power and communication lines. All on-site power and communication lines running between banks of solar panels and buildings shall be buried underground on premise;

D. Solar Farms: Ground-mount solar energy arrays which are the principal use on the property, that are designed for providing energy to off-site users or export to the wholesale market shall be a permitted use in all zones excluding those defined in d(3). A Conditional Use Permit (CUP) will be required for Solar Farms, and farms shall be subject to the following:

- 1) Solar Farms which have a generating capacity of 50 megawatts of power or more shall fall under the jurisdiction of the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission;
- 2) Solar Farms shall be located on parcels of land no less than five acres in size;
- 3) Prohibitions: The County prohibits Community Solar Farms within the following zoning district of Shoreland, designated wetland areas, and within 600 feet of areas designated or formally protected from development by Federal, State, or County Agencies as wildlife habitat, wildlife management areas or designated as National Wild and Scenic land or corridor;
- 4) All Solar Farm components must meet the setback, height and coverage limitations for the zoning district in which the system is located;
- 5) Power and communication lines. All on-site power and communication lines running between banks of solar panels and buildings shall be buried underground on premise;

18.03 Application Requirements:

- A. An Interim Use Permit (IUP) shall be required for a Community Solar Energy System and a Conditional Use Permit (CUP) for a Solar Farm which is situated, (or is staged to be eventually situated) on a contiguous or aggregate site area footprint larger than 5 acres in size, whether commonly owned/controlled or otherwise.
- B. A CSES or Solar Farm which has the capacity to generate 50 megawatts or more shall fall under the jurisdiction of the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission and shall not be subject to County review.



- C. Landscaping and buffer screening visible from adjacent residential properties and public rights-of-way shall be submitted to minimize the visual impact of the above grade site improvements. If an applicant can show that proposed site improvements are not visible from the immediate adjacent properties, or rights-of-ways by existing vegetation or topography, the screening requirement may be waived. The Planning Commission will consider and may impose further details as to the vegetative screening.
- D. A Security and Safety Plan shall be submitted with CSES and Solar Farms applications.

#### 18.04 Conditional Use Permit (CUP) and Interim Use Permit (IUP) Submittal Requirements

CUP applications for solar energy systems shall be accompanied by horizontal and vertical elevation drawings, drawn to scale. The drawings shall show the location of the system components on the property, as well as other elements, including but not limited to the following:

- 1) Existing features
- 2) Proposed features
- 3) Property boundaries
- 4) Property zoning designations (including district property line and roadway setbacks.
- 5) Solar arrays, connecting lines, and all affiliated installations and structures.
- 6) Access points, drive aisles, security features, and fencing.
- 7) Topography & surface water drainage patterns and treatment systems.
- 8) Existing and proposed/preserved/protected wildlife corridors.
- 9) Landscape Plan, including required screening of site perimeter and/or perimeter security fencing.
- 10) Floodplains
- 11) Soils
- 12) Environmental mitigation measures

#### 18.05 Decommissioning Plan

- A. The owner/operator shall submit a decommissioning plan for all solar energy systems to ensure that the owner or operator properly removes the equipment and/or facilities upon the end of the project life or after their useful life. The owner or operator shall decommission the solar panels in the event they are not in use for twelve (12) consecutive months. The plan shall include provisions for the removal of all structures and foundations, the removal of all electrical transmission components, the restoration of soil and vegetation, as well as provide a soundly-based plan, ensuring financial resources will

be available to fully decommission the site. The disposal of the structures and/or foundations shall meet the requirements of the Aitkin County Solid Waste Ordinance.

- B. The owner/operator of CSES and/or Solar Farm shall provide a current-day decommissioning cost estimate, and shall post a bond, letter of credit or establish an escrow account, including an inflationary escalator, in an amount determined by the Aitkin County Planning Commission or at a minimum of \$1400.00 per acre, to ensure proper decommissioning.
- C. This section is pursuant to the provisions of Minnesota Statutes Section 394.37. It is declared unlawful for any person to violate any of the terms or conditions and violation thereof shall be a misdemeanor.