Portside Solar Project

Special Land Use Permit Application Narrative

Prepared for:

Fort Gratiot Township

Prepared by:

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I. PROJECT INTRODUCTION

On behalf of Portside Solar, LLC (Portside, or the Applicant), Atwell, LLC (Atwell) has prepared this application for a Special Land Use Permit and Site Plan for the Portside Solar Project (the Project) within Fort Gratiot Township, St. Clair County, Michigan. The Project is proposed for development by Ranger Power, LLC (Ranger Power, or Ranger). A checklist summarizing all requirements for the Special Land Use Permit and Site Plan and their location within the application package is included as **Appendix A** and **Appendix B**. In addition, the Fort Gratiot Township Application for Special Land Use Permit form is included as **Appendix C**.

1) APPLICANT INFORMATION

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Ranger Power is a utility-scale renewable energy development company headquartered in Chicago, Illinois, focused on bringing well-sited, community-supported solar energy to states in the Midwest. Ranger Power has a development portfolio of approximately 10 GW of active projects ranging in nameplate capacity from 50 MW to 400 MW.

Since 2017, Ranger has permitted more than 2,600 MW and executed over 2,600 MW of utility-scale Power Purchase and Build-Own-Transfer agreements with leading power providers throughout the region. This represents some of the largest volumes of solar development in the Midwest.

Over 1,100 MW of solar projects developed by Ranger have moved into construction, 586 MW of which are now commercially operating--many of these projects represent the largest solar projects operating in their respective states. By the end of 2023, Ranger anticipates that nearly 1 GW of projects developed by Ranger Power will be in commercial operation, delivering on our sustained value and trust to our partners.

Some examples of Ranger's leadership in the market include the recently completed construction on all three phases of the 239 MW Assembly solar project in Shiawassee County, Michigan, which is the largest operational solar project in the State. The Ranger-developed 149 MW River Fork project started construction in 2021. Dressor Plains, Prairie State, and Big River are all Ranger developed projects in Illinois, collectively 347 MW. Prairie State and Dressor Plains became operational in 2Q 2021 and are the largest operating solar projects in the state. Big River became operational in 3Q 2022.

Ranger is led by one of the most experienced teams in the renewable energy space. Their time-tested approach to development, which separates Ranger from the competition, involves working closely with landowners and communities to gain their support when bringing new investment and clean energy to the region.

Ranger Power is an industry leader because of the commitment to work closely with communities to ensure projects are a win-win. Ranger Power projects represent a significant investment and a new clean energy resource

that benefits local residents, business owners, and stakeholders through bringing new investment and tax base, employment opportunities, and educational opportunities.

2) PROJECT SUMMARY

The Project will include up to 100 MW (megawatts) of photovoltaic solar panels located in Clyde and Fort Gratiot townships, St. Clair County, Michigan. Of the 100 MW capacity generated by the Project, approximately 75 MW is proposed within Fort Gratiot Township. There are seventeen participating parcels proposed in Fort Gratiot, totaling approximately 881 acres. Of this, **solar panels have been sited within a fenced-in area of approximately 527 acres (Project Area)**. Four of the seventeen participating parcels only contain a proposed underground collection line and will not be used for project panels. Land use within the Project Area is primarily agriculture and undeveloped woodlots. The Project Area was selected based on land use, interest from landowners, and proximity to existing electrical grid infrastructure.

The Applicant has acquired the rights to develop, construct, and operate an up to 100-MW alternating current (AC) solar project on seventeen parcels of land owned by five private landowners located in Fort Gratiot Township. These land rights are granted by easement agreements or by purchase option agreement. A list of participating parcels in Fort Gratiot Township is included in **Appendix D**.

The Project will consist of solar panels and inverters arranged in photovoltaic (PV) arrays. Associated facilities include the Project substation, overhead transmission line to point-of-interconnection, underground electrical cables to collect the generated power and transmit it to the Project substation, perimeter fencing, and gravel access roads to each PV array. The Project substation is proposed within Clyde Township and will not be discussed further in this document. The proposed locations of the solar arrays, inverters, collection lines, access roads, fencing, and other Project improvements within Fort Gratiot Township are shown in the Site Plan in **Appendix B**.

As demonstrated throughout this application narrative, Ranger Power made a comprehensive and diligent effort in designing and siting a facility that meets or exceeds the requirements of the Fort Gratiot Township Zoning Ordinance and Solar Energy Systems Ordinance. As sited, the Project optimizes efficient use of land to generate solar power, while avoiding impacts to natural resources or existing land uses. Additionally, as designed, the Project avoids impacts to wetlands and floodplains. In addition, the Project will utilize setbacks that meet or exceed the setback requirements set forth in the Fort Gratiot Township Zoning Ordinance and will install landscape screening in areas adjacent to non-participating residential parcels, where adequate screening does not already exist. The Project plans to coordinate with stakeholders and township officials throughout Project permitting, construction, and operation, and has received wide-ranging support from community members.

The Applicant is coordinating a power purchase agreement (PPA) for the purchase of the power generated by Project. Construction is expected to begin in 2025, with commercial operation anticipated in 2026. Exact construction and operation dates are dependent on receipt of necessary permits, equipment, and approvals.

Ranger Power is fortunate to present a project that community members, local stakeholders, and job seekers alike can be proud of.

II. SOLAR ENERGY SYSTEMS ORDINANCE

Pursuant to the Fort Gratiot Township Solar Ordinance, the Project is defined as large principal-use solar energy system (SES). Large principal-use solar energy systems (SES) are a special land use in the AG, O-1, O-2, C-1, C-2, M-1, AND M-2 zoning districts. The Project is sited entirely within the agricultural (AG) zoning district of Fort Gratiot Township. Refer to the Zoning Map in **Appendix B**: Site Plan Sheet 02.

1. GENERAL PROVISIONS

Section 38-117, *General Provisions Regarding Solar Energy Systems*, of the Fort Gratiot Charter Township Zoning Ordinance No. 226, states the requirements for large principal-use solar energy systems (SES), which the Project will be designed to accommodate.

1. **Total height for a large principal-use SES shall not exceed the maximum allowed height in the district in which the system is located.**

   A height of 35 feet shall not be exceeded by Project infrastructure. The height of the solar array at maximum tilt will not exceed the height requirements set forth for the Agricultural District in accordance with that district's schedule of regulations.
   Refer to Solar Details in **Appendix B**: Site Plan Sheet 17.

2. **2. Setback distance shall be measured from the property line or road right-of-way to the closest point of the solar array at minimum tilt or any SES components and as follows:**
   a. In accordance with the setbacks for principal buildings or structures for the zoning district of the project site.
   b. 100 feet from any existing dwelling unit on a non-participating lot.

   The project meets all applicable setback requirements. An additional setback of 100 feet from any solar panels to any existing dwelling unit on a non-participating lot will be followed.
   Refer to Setback Tables in **Appendix B**: Site Plan Sheets 4 - 13.

3. **A large principal-use SES may be secured with perimeter fencing to restrict unauthorized access. If installed, perimeter fencing shall be a maximum of 6' feet in height. Fencing is not subject to setbacks.**

   Perimeter fencing will be installed around all proposed panels with a maximum height of 7' to restrict unauthorized access and to meet standards of the National Electric Safety Code (NESC) and Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers (IEEE) guidelines, which the Project will be built in compliance with.
   Refer to Proposed Conditions in **Appendix B**: Site Plan Sheets 4 - 13 and Security Details in **Appendix B**: Site Plan Sheet 14.

4. **A large principal-use SES shall follow the screening and/or landscaping standards for the zoning district of the project site. Any required screening and landscaping shall be placed outside the perimeter fencing. Screening/landscaping detail shall be submitted as part of the site plan that identifies the type and extent of screening for a large principal-use SES, which may include plantings, strategic use of berms, and/or fencing.**

   Vegetative screening is proposed along all non-participating residential and public uses where existing screening is not adequate. All proposed screening will be placed outside the perimeter fencing.
   Refer to the Landscaping Plan in **Appendix B**: Site Plan Sheet 12 and to the Landscaping & Vegetation Details in **Appendix B**: Site Plan Sheet 16.

5. **A large principal-use SES shall include the installation of ground cover vegetation maintained for the duration of operation until the site is decommissioned. The applicant shall include a ground cover vegetation establishment and management plan as part of the site plan. Vegetation establishment must include invasive plant species and noxious weed control. The following standards apply:**

   a. Sites bound by a Farmland Development Rights (PA 116) Agreement must follow the Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development's Policy for Allowing Commercial Solar Panel Development on PA 116 Lands.

   b. Ground cover at sites not enrolled in PA 116 must meet one or more of the four types of Dual Use defined in this ordinance.
   i. Pollinator Habitat: Solar sites designed to meet a score of 76 or more on the Michigan Pollinator Habitat Planning Scorecard for Solar Sites.
   ii. Conservation Cover: Solar sites designed in consultation with conservation organizations that focus on restoring native plants, grasses, and prairie with the aim of protecting specific species (e.g., bird habitat) or providing specific ecosystem services (e.g., carbon sequestration, soil health).
   iii. Forage: Solar sites that incorporate rotational livestock grazing and forage production as part of an overall vegetative maintenance plan.
   iv. Agrivoltaics: Solar sites that combine raising crops for food, fiber, or fuel, and generating electricity within the project area to maximize land use. Project sites that are included in a brownfield plan adopted under the Brownfield Redevelopment Financing Act, PA 381 of 1996, as amended, that contain impervious surface at the time of construction or soils that cannot be disturbed, are exempt from ground cover requirements.

   c. Project sites that are included in a brownfield plan adopted under the Brownfield Redevelopment Financing Act, PA 381 of 1996, as amended, that contain impervious surface at the time of construction or soils that cannot be disturbed, are exempt from ground cover requirements.

   Construction and implementation of the Project will include the installation of ground cover vegetation maintained for the duration of operation until the site is decommissioned.
   Refer to the Vegetation Plan in **Appendix B**: Site Plan Sheet 13 and Landscaping & Vegetation Details in **Appendix B**: Site Plan Sheet 16 for ground cover vegetation establishment and management activities.

   a) Parcels in the Project Area bound by a PA 116 agreement will follow MDARD'S *Policy for Allowing Commercial Solar Panel Development* on PA 116 Lands.
   b) Ground cover in the Project Area not enrolled in PA 116 will meet the Pollinator Habitat dual use type defined in the Fort Gratiot Township Solar Ordinance.
   c) Not Applicable

6. **A large principal-use SES shall not count towards the maximum lot coverage or impervious surface standards for the district.**

   The Applicant understands that large principal-use SES shall not count towards the maximum lot coverage or impervious surface standards for the district.

7. **Land disturbance or clearing shall be limited to what is minimally necessary for the installation and operation of the system and to ensure sufficient all-season access to the solar resource given the**

topography of the land. Topsoil distributed during site preparation (grading) on the property shall be retained on site.

Land disturbance or clearing prior to construction of the Project will be limited to what is minimally necessary for the installation and operation of the system and to ensure sufficient all-season access to the solar resource given the topography of the land. Topsoil distributed during site preparation and grading will be retained on site.

The final site design will include grading and elevations after final engineering. Localized grading will be necessary to meet equipment tolerances and for maintaining drainage. A final grading and soil erosion control plan will be developed by the Engineering, Procurement, and Construction (EPC) contractor upon final electrical design.

Refer to Proposed Conditions in **Appendix B**: Site Plan on Sheets 4 - 13 for topographic contours and existing structures, and to the Landscaping Plan in **Appendix B**: Site Plan Sheet 12 for details on planned disturbance.

8. **New access drives within the SES shall be designed to minimize the extent of soil disturbance, water runoff, and soil compaction on the premises. The use of geotextile fabrics and gravel placed on the surface of the existing soil for the construction of temporary drives during the construction of the SES is permitted, provided that the geotextile fabrics and gravel are removed once the SES is in operation.**

   Access roads constructed for the Project will be designed to minimize the extent of soil disturbance, water runoff, and soil compaction on the premises. 16’ wide gravel access roads are designed for the Project from public roads to inverter pads. Access drives will be constructed to allow stormwater to sheet across and prevent puddling. Refer to Proposed Conditions in **Appendix B**: Site Plan Sheets 4 - 13 for locations of planned access roads and Crossing & Access Road Details in **Appendix B**: Site Plan Sheet 15 for dimensions and specifications.

9. **SES wiring (including communication lines) may be buried underground. Any above- ground wiring within the footprint of the SES shall not exceed the height of the solar array at maximum tilt.**

   Any aboveground wiring within the footprint of the SES will not exceed the height of the solar array at maximum tilt. Refer to **Appendix B**: Site Plan Sheet 17.

10. **Large principal-use SES lighting shall be limited to inverter and/or substation locations only. Light fixtures shall have downlit shielding and be placed to keep light on-site and glare away from adjacent properties, bodies of water, and adjacent roadways. Flashing or intermittent lights are prohibited.**

    The proposed substation is not sited within Fort Gratiot Township and lighting will not be used at panel inverters. Therefore, lighting is not proposed for the Project within Fort Gratiot Township. Additionally, the project will not produce glare on adjacent properties, bodies of water, and adjacent roadways. Refer to **Appendix G**: Glint/Glare Study.

11. **Signage may be at the project site, with the maximum area signage allowed per the requirements of 38-5 Schedules A, B, C and D. Any signage shall meet the setback, illumination, and materials/ construction requirements of the zoning district for the project site.**

Signage relating to the Project will comply with the maximum area signage allowed per the requirements of the agricultural zoning district, meeting all setback, illumination, and materials/construction requirements for that district. Refer to **Appendix B**: Site Plan Sheet 14.

12. **The sound pressure level of a large principal-use SES and all ancillary solar equipment shall not exceed 45 dBA at the property line of an adjoining non-participating lot. The site plan shall include modeled sound isolines extending from the sound source to the property lines to demonstrate compliance with this standard.**

    The Project has been designed to minimize audible sound at neighboring residences and buildings. According to the Project's Sound Modeling Study, the sound pressure level emanating from the Project and supporting infrastructure once constructed sound levels is not anticipated to exceed 45 A-weighted decibels (dBA). Refer to **Appendix E**: Sound Modeling Study.

13. **In addition to repairing or replacing SES components to maintain the system, a large principal-use SES may at any time be repowered, without the need to apply for a new special land-use permit, by reconfiguring, renovating, or replacing the SES to increase the power rating within the existing project footprint. a. A proposal to change the project footprint of an existing SES shall be considered a new application, subject to the ordinance standards at the time of the request. Expenses for legal services and other studies resulting from an application to modify an SES will be reimbursed to Fort Gratiot Charter Township by the SES owner in compliance with established escrow policy.**

    The Applicant understands that in addition to repairing or replacing SES components to maintain the system, a large principal-use SES may at any time be repowered, without the need to apply for a new special land-use permit, by reconfiguring, renovating, or replacing the SES to increase the power rating within the existing project footprint.

14. **A decommissioning plan is required at the time of application.**

    a. The decommission plan shall include:
    i. The anticipated manner in which the project will be decommissioned, including a description of which above-grade and below-grade improvements will be removed, retained (e.g. access drive, fencing), or restored for viable reuse of the property consistent with the zoning district,
    ii. The projected decommissioning costs for removal of the SES (net of salvage value in current dollars) and soil stabilization, less the amount of the surety bond posted with the State of Michigan for decommissioning of panels installed on PA 116 lands,
    iii. The method of ensuring that funds will be available for site decommissioning and stabilization (in the form of surety bond, irrevocable letter of credit, or cash deposit), and

    b. A review of the amount of the performance guarantee based on inflation, salvage value, and current removal costs shall be completed every 5 years, for the life of the project, and approved by the board. An SES owner may at any time:
    i. Proceed with the decommissioning plan approved by the or Planning Commission and remove the system as indicated in the most recent approved plan; or
    ii. Amend the decommissioning plan with Zoning Administrator approval and proceed according to the revised plan.

c. Decommissioning an SES must commence when the soil is dry to prevent soil compaction and must be complete within 12 months after abandonment. An SES that has not produced electrical energy for 12 consecutive months shall prompt an abandonment hearing.

At the end of the Project's operational life, it will be decommissioned and can be returned to agricultural use. The project will meet all decommissioning requirements. Refer to **Appendix F**: Project Decommissioning Plan.

III. SPECIAL LAND USES [ORDINANCE SEC. 38]

In accordance with Article IV, Section 38-483 of the Fort Gratiot Township Zoning Ordinance, Ranger Power has provided the Planning Commission with this application package, which provides the data required for a Special Land Use Permit (SLUP) application. Refer to the Special Land Use / Site Plan Review Checklist in Appendix A for a summary of SLUP and Site Plan Requirements and where they can be found in this SLUP application package and Site Plan.

PERMIT STANDARDS

GENERAL STANDARDS/REQUIREMENTS FOR APPROVAL FOR SPECIAL LAND USE PERMIT

Ranger Power understands that all solar energy systems, whether ground mounted or roof mounted, are subject to the following general requirements set forth in Section 38-486 of the Fort Gratiot Township Zoning Ordinance:

1) Will be in accordance with the general objectives, intent, and purposes of this chapter.

a. Will be consistent with maintenance of the public health, safety, and welfare.

The Project will not generate traffic, noise, smoke, fumes, glare, or odors detrimental to health, safety, or general welfare of the community during operations. The Project is implementing setbacks from non-participating properties, public roadways, and residences that meet or exceed the requirements set forth in the Fort Gratiot Zoning Ordinance. Construction of the Project will produce a minor increase in local traffic; however, this small increase will be temporary, and measures will be put in place to ensure traffic safety. During operation, vehicular traffic will not increase in association with the Project.

The Project has been designed to minimize audible sound resulting from Project inverters including a voluntary 350' setback from residences. As demonstrated by the Project's Sound Modeling Study (**Appendix E**), sound levels at neighboring residences will comply with all Ordinance requirements.

Operation of a PV solar energy system does not generate emissions, smoke, fumes, or odors. Solar panels are constructed of layered glass, aluminum, and crystalline silicon. Crystalline silicon is a common mineral found naturally within the earth's crust, as well as in sand, stone, concrete, and mortar. As such, the Project will not disturb or be hazardous to any surrounding uses permitted within the adjacent zoning districts or produce any hazardous by-products, as the panels are chemically inert. Furthermore, at the end of its operational life, the Project will be removed in accordance with the Decommissioning Plan provided in **Appendix F**, and land may be returned to its current use.

The Project will not result in glint/glare that would impact neighboring properties or vehicles on the road. The solar panels that will be used for the Project have been designed with an anti-glare coating. A glare hazard analysis did not predict glare to be reflected to any residences or businesses. Refer to the Glint/Glare Study in **Appendix G** for details.

b. Will be of such location, size, and character that it will be in harmony with all applicable regulations of the zoning district in which it is to be located.

Located in the Agricultural District (AG) of Fort Gratiot Township, the Project is designed and will be constructed, operated, and maintained to be harmonious with and in appearance with the rural character of the surrounding area. The Project will maintain the area's low density and will not increase area road traffic once constructed. With the panels positioned to catch the morning or evening sun, the height of the panels will be similar to that of full-grown corn. Perennial vegetative groundcover will be planted and maintained throughout the Project area similar to cover crops in typically agricultural operations or land enrolled in the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Farm Service Agency Conservation Reserve Program. Refer to the Vegetation Plan in **Appendix B**: Site Plan Sheet 12 and the Landscaping & Vegetation Details in **Appendix B**: Site Plan Sheet 16.

The Project is sited exclusively on property zoned as Agricultural District (AG) land, the majority of which is currently used for agriculture. Refer to the Zoning Map in **Appendix B**: Site Plan Sheet 2. The Project will preserve the agricultural character and visual appeal of adjacent properties through design measures such as the perimeter fencing that will be constructed with wooden posts and woven fiber, as opposed to standard chain-link fencing; setbacks from roads and residences; landscape buffering; and planting a perennial vegetative ground cover throughout the site. Refer to the Proposed Conditions in **Appendix B:** Site Plan Sheets 4 - 13 and Security Details in **Appendix B:** Site Plan Sheet 14.

The Applicant has committed to seeding the Project Area with a mix of pollinator-friendly and other vegetation determined to be appropriate for the region that will be compatible with the surrounding landscape. Pollinator-friendly vegetation planted within the project area will decrease erosion, increase stormwater control, increase biodiversity within the project area, and maintain the character of the surrounding area. Refer to the Vegetation Plan in **Appendix B:** Site Plan Sheet 13 and the Landscaping and Vegetation Details in **Appendix B:** Site Plan Sheet 16. Overall, the Project is designed to be harmonious and compatible with the general agricultural vicinity and, at the end of the Project's operational life, it will be decommissioned and can be returned to agricultural use. Refer to the Project Decommissioning Plan included in **Appendix F**.

(2) Will be served adequately by essential public facilities and services such as highways, streets, police and fire protection, drainage structures, refuse disposal, or that persons or agencies responsible for establishment of the proposed use shall be able to provide adequately any such service; will be of a nature that will make vehicular and pedestrian traffic no more hazardous than is normal for the district involved, taking into consideration vehicular turning movements in relation to routes of traffic flow, proximity and relationship to intersections, adequacy of sight distances, location and access of off-street parking and provisions for pedestrian traffic with particular attention to minimizing child-vehicle contacts in residential districts.

The Project does not include any new public roadways and solar panels will be set back from public road rights-of-way (ROWs). During operation, the Project will not generate vehicular or pedestrian traffic. Access roads have been designed to provide safe and efficient ingress and egress points for maintenance crews or emergency vehicles. Refer to the Crossing and Access Road Details in **Appendix B**: Site Plan Sheet 15.

The Project will be served adequately by the existing streets and highways for the construction of the Project. Transportation and installation of the components will not require special accommodations of the existing infrastructure. Workforce and component delivery routes will follow designated and approved routes, and the Project will coordinate with the St. Clair County Road Commission to document road conditions before and after construction to ensure no damage to public roadways has occurred as a result of the Project. Refer to Crossing & Access Road Details in **Appendix B**: Site Plan Sheet 15.

In addition, the Project will comply with all applicable regulations of the St. Clair County Drain Commission. The Applicant will notify the Port Huron Fire Department prior to construction so they can visit during construction to obtain an on-the-ground understanding of the Project layout and emergency access points.

While in operation, the Project will require a staff of 3-6 personnel. The Project will coordinate with local utilities to arrange suitable electric, water, trash disposal, and septic services for the facility. The Project will obtain all building, electrical, plumbing, and other permits required by the St. Clair County Building Inspection and

Environmental Services Department prior to construction. As such, the Project and its use are expected to be served adequately by existing public services and facilities.

In addition, not only will the Project avoid any negative impacts to schools or community, but taxes generated by the Project are anticipated to contribute to community schools, including payments towards school debt. The Project is not expected to require any additional local police or fire department resources and, in fact, will increase local tax revenue benefiting local fire departments. Refer to the Project Property Tax Impact Report in **Appendix H** and the Real Estate Adjacent Property Value Impact Report in **Appendix I**.

(3) Will be compatible with adjacent uses of land and the natural environment.

The Michigan Department of Agriculture & Rural Development ("MDARD") now recognizes the need to install solar arrays on agricultural land, including land enrolled in PA116. Agricultural land is compatible for land use for solar development as the land generally consists of large acreage conducive to low-intensity development such as solar. The Project will serve to supplement farming incomes and allow for nutrient and land recharge while supporting native vegetation and pollinator habitat species. Giving soil rest can help maintain soil quality and contribute to biodiversity of agricultural land to increase nutrient levels and enable the land to revert back to agricultural uses at the end of the operational life for solar installations. The solar arrays will be mounted on piles, minimizing disturbance to the land. Grasses and other vegetation will be allowed to grow underneath and between panels and will be maintained against overgrowth. Refer to the Vegetation Plan in **Appendix B**: Site Plan Sheet 13 and Landscaping & Vegetation Details in **Appendix B**: Site Plan Sheet 16.

Presence of pollinator-friendly species has been shown to increase production of pollinator-dependent crops, such as soybeans. In addition, pollinator-friendly species tend to have deeper root systems, which filter and store more water, thereby decreasing runoff and increasing groundwater storage, and these species tend to require less chemical fertilizer and herbicide, therefore also decreasing pollutants entering surface waters and groundwater. Additionally, soil removal and topographic modifications will be completed in accordance with site-specific construction best management practices (BMPs) and the stabilization of the site will be managed to prevent soil erosion. Refer to the Landscaping Plan in **Appendix B**: Site Plan Sheet 12, Vegetation Plan in **Appendix B**: Site Plan Sheet 13, and Landscaping & Vegetation Details in **Appendix B**: Site Plan Sheet 16.

The Project has been designed to prioritize the preservation of significant natural features such as steeper slopes, wetlands, surface water features, floodplains, sensitive cultural and archaeological sites, and other unique or significant natural areas to the extent practicable. In addition, the Project will utilize 25' voluntary setbacks around natural resources where applicable. As part of the due diligence for the Project, the Applicant contracted Atwell to complete environmental assessments for the Project including a biological habitat assessment, wetland delineation, and cultural resource review. The results of these surveys were used to inform Project design and reduce potential impacts to significant natural features. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) -recommended BMPs will be used to minimize impacts to potential threatened or endangered species (TES) and their habitat during the construction of the Project.

a. Will be of such location, size and character that it will be in harmony with the appropriate and orderly development of the surrounding neighborhood.

Use of the Project Area for a solar energy system is compatible with surrounding uses and will be harmonious with the appropriate development of the surrounding properties. Uses surrounding the Project include agricultural/croplands, single-family residential and farmsteads, undeveloped woodlots, and access roads. The Project will not impede appropriate and orderly development of the surrounding properties. Refer to the Zoning Map in **Appendix B**: Site Plan Sheet 2 and to the Real Estate Adjacent Property Value Impact Report in **Appendix I**.

b. Will be designed such that the location, size, intensity, site layout and periods of operation of any such proposed use shall eliminate any possible nuisance emanating therefrom which might be noxious to the

occupants of any other nearby permitted uses, whether by reason of dust, noise, fumes, vibration, smoke, or lights.

The Project will include vegetative screening between the areas containing panels and adjacent land uses. The Project will not result in sound or glare impacts to the surrounding properties. Refer to **Appendix E**: Sound Modeling Study and **Appendix G**: Glint/Glare Study.

c. Will be designed such that the proposed location and height of buildings or structures and location, nature and height of walls, fences and landscaping will not interfere with or discourage the appropriate development and use of adjacent land and buildings.

The Project is designed such that it will not interfere with or discourage appropriate development and use of surrounding properties. Specifically, landscape buffering will be implemented along adjacent, non-participating residential and public uses. In addition, in accordance with the Project's ground cover vegetation establishment and management plan, the fenced in areas of the Project will be planted with a seed mix appropriate for the region. The perimeter fencing will be constructed with wooden posts and woven fiber, as opposed to standard chain-link fencing. Refer to the Landscaping Plan in **Appendix B**: Site Plan Sheet 12, Vegetation Plan in **Appendix B**: Site Plan Sheet 13, and Landscaping & Vegetation Details in **Appendix B**: Site Plan Sheet 16.

d. Will not cause substantial injury to the value of other property in the neighborhood in which it is to be located.

The Project will not cause injury to the value of other property in the neighborhood in which it is located. As described in the Real Estate Adjacent Property Value Impact Report, solar facilities of similar size and in similar rural areas in Michigan and across the Midwest have consistently been shown to have no measurable impact on property values in the surrounding area or neighborhood. Refer to the Project Property Tax Impact Report in **Appendix H** and the Real Estate Adjacent Property Value Impact Report in **Appendix I**.

(4) Will promote the use of land in a socially and economically desirable manner; will relate harmoniously with the physical and economic aspects of adjacent land uses as regards prevailing shopping habits, convenience of access by prospective patrons, continuity of development, and need for particular services and facilities in specific areas of the township.

Located in the Agricultural District (AG) of Fort Gratiot Township, the Project is designed and will be constructed, operated, and maintained to be harmonious with and in appearance with the rural character of the surrounding area. The Project will maintain the area's low density and will not increase area road traffic once constructed. With the panels positioned to catch the morning or evening sun, the height of the panels will be similar to that of full-grown corn. The Project is implementing setbacks from non-participating properties, public roadways, and residences that meet the requirements set forth in the Fort Gratiot Zoning Ordinance. Perennial vegetative groundcover will be planted and maintained throughout the Project area similar to cover crops in typically agricultural operations or land enrolled in the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Farm Service Agency Conservation Reserve Program. The Project is sited exclusively on property zoned as Agricultural District (AG) land, the majority of which is currently used for agriculture. Refer to the Zoning Map in **Appendix B**: Site Plan Sheet 2.

The Project will preserve the agricultural character and visual appeal of the Project from the adjacent properties through design measures such as the perimeter fencing that will be constructed with wooden posts and woven fiber, as opposed to standard chain-link fencing; landscape buffering along adjacent, non-participating residential parcels, if requested by the parcel owner; and planting a perennial vegetative ground cover throughout the site. Refer to the Proposed Conditions in **Appendix B**: Site Plan Sheets 4 - 13 and Security Details in **Appendix B**: Site Plan Sheet 14.

The Applicant has committed to seeding the Project Area with a mix of pollinator-friendly and other vegetation determined to be appropriate for the region that will be compatible with the surrounding landscape. Pollinator-friendly vegetation planted within the project area will decrease erosion, increase stormwater control, increase

biodiversity within the Project area, and maintain the character of the surrounding area. Refer to the Landscaping Plan in **Appendix B**: Site Plan Sheet 12, Vegetation Plan in **Appendix B**: Site Plan Sheet 13, and Landscaping & Vegetation Details in **Appendix B**: Site Plan Sheet 16.

Overall, the Project is designed to be harmonious and compatible with the general agricultural vicinity and, at the end of the Project's operational life, it will be decommissioned and can be returned to agricultural use. Refer to the Project Decommissioning Plan included in **Appendix F.**

Not only will the Project avoid any negative financial impacts to the community, but taxes generated by the Project are anticipated to contribute to community schools, infrastructure, and services in Fort Gratiot. Refer to the Project Property Tax Impact Report in **Appendix H.**

The Project promotes the use of land within Fort Gratiot Township in a socially and economically desirable manner by providing renewable energy to communities in Michigan through a low-profile, strategically sited solar project designed to maintain and protect the land's historical usage for agricultural production. Solar energy generation in St. Clair County will contribute to the stability and availability of energy resources in Michigan.

IV. ZONING ORDINANCE SEC. 38-46

The Applicant has prepared a site plan (**Appendix B**) in accordance with the requirements of Sec. 38-46(1) of the Fort Gratiot Charter Township Zoning Ordinance, which states that a site plan is required for any building or use requiring special approval. Refer to the Special Land Use / Site Plan Review Checklist included with **Appendix A**. The Site Plan includes maps showing the physical features and land uses of the Project Area, both before and after construction of the proposed project.

SITE PLAN REVIEW PROCESS

Per Sec. 38-46(2) of the Fort Gratiot Charter Township Zoning Ordinance, a request may be filed for site plan review by the planning commission by filing with the township clerk the complete application upon the forms furnished by the clerk. At least 11 copies of a site plan will be included.

REQUIRED DATA

In accordance with Sec. 38-46(3) Fort Gratiot Charter Township Zoning Ordinance, the site plan will adhere to the following requirements:

a. The site plan shall be of a scale not greater than one-inch equals 20 feet, and not less than one inch equal 200 feet, and of such accuracy that the planning commission can readily interpret the site plan, and shall include more than one drawing when required for clarity.

b. The property shall be identified by lot lines and location, including dimensions, angles, and size, and correlated with the legal description of such property. Such plan shall further include the name and address of the property owner, and developer. The site plan shall bear at least one or more seals of an architect or professional engineer licensed to practice in the state.

c. The site plan shall show scale; north point; boundary dimensions; topography (at least two-foot contour intervals); and natural features, such as woodlots, streams, rivers, lakes, drains, and similar features.

d. The site plan shall show existing manmade features, such as buildings; structures; high tension towers; pipelines; and existing utilities, such as water and sewer lines, excavations, bridges, culverts, drains, and easements; and shall identify adjacent properties and their existing uses.

e. The site plan shall show the location, proposed finished floor and grade line elevations, size of proposed principal and accessory buildings, their relation one to another and to any existing structures on the site, the height of all buildings, and square footage of floor space. Site plans for residential development shall include a

density schedule showing the number of dwelling units per net acre, including a dwelling schedule showing the unit type and number of each unit type.

f. The site plan shall show the proposed streets, driveways, sidewalks, and other vehicular and pedestrian circulation features within and adjacent to the site; also, the location, size, and number of parking spaces in the off-street parking area, and the identification of service lanes and service parking.

g. The site plan shall show the proposed location, use, and size of open spaces; and the location of any landscaping, fences, or walls on the site. The site plan shall further show any proposed location of connections of existing utilities and proposed extension thereof.

h. A vicinity map shall be submitted showing the location of the site in relation to the surrounding street system.

Refer to **Appendix A:** Special Land Use / Site Plan Review Checklist for a summary of required documents and their locations within the Project Special Land Use Permit Application and Site Plan. The above-listed requirements are included in the Site Plan in **Appendix B** and the Fort Gratiot Charter Township Special Land Use Permit Application in **Appendix C**. Design drawings and engineering calculations have been certified by a Professional Engineer licensed in the State of Michigan.

V. ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

1) CERTIFICATIONS

The Applicant will comply with all applicable federal, state, and local laws and regulations and will obtain all required federal, state, and local approvals, licenses, permits or variances for the proposed large solar energy system prior to the start date of construction. The Applicant ensures their projects are sited in an environmentally responsible manner and in compliance with all applicable local, state, and federal laws and regulations.

The following list represents some of the permits and approvals to be reviewed as part of this project:

AGENCY	DESCRIPTION	STATUS
EGLE-WRD	Potential NREPA permits/approvals include: ● Part 31 Floodplains ● Part 301 Watercourses ● Part 303 Wetlands	Application Anticipated
St. Clair County	Soil Erosion and Sedimentation Control Permit	Application Anticipated
DTE Energy	Electrical Line Easement Crossing Agreements	Application Anticipated
Michigan Department of Transportation	Driveway Crossing Agreements	Application Anticipated

2) CONSTRUCTION CODES AND INTERCONNECTION STANDARDS

Applicant will comply with all applicable state construction and electrical codes and St. Clair County building permit requirements, as well as all applicable utility, Michigan Public Service Commission, and Federal Energy Regulatory Commission interconnection standards.

3) CONSTRUCTION SCHEDULE

Upon approval of the SLUP application, the below table depicts an anticipated construction schedule outlining major project milestones.

Portside Solar Milestones	
Mobilization	Q2 2025
Start of Construction	Q2 2025
Commercial Operation Date	Q4 2026

VI. CONCLUSION

This submission and its attachments demonstrate the Applicant's compliance with the Fort Gratiot Township Zoning Ordinance. Upon approval of the Special Land Use Permit, Ranger Power looks forward to the opportunity to construct the Project. The Project will supply clean renewable energy to the state and will operate in compliance with all applicable local, state, and federal regulations.