



Meeting Date: September 29, 2025

Item No. **6B**

PLAN COMMISSION REPORT

Proposal: Building, Site, and Operation Plan Review

Description: Review a building, site, and operation plan for a proposed 0.241-acre, ground solar array for Gifford School located at 8332 Northwestern Avenue.

Applicant(s): Sean Currie

Address(es): 8332 Northwestern Avenue

Suggested Motion: That the Plan Commission recommends to the Village Board that the building, site, and operation plan for the constructions of a 0.241-acre ground solar power array located at 8332 Northwestern be approved for the following reason:

1. The proposed accessory use is allowed by underlying zoning through the building, site, and operation plan review process.

Owner(s): Racine Unified School District

Tax Key(s): 104-04-22-34-064-000

Lot Size(s): 28.468 acres

Current Zoning District(s): R-3, Single Family Residential District

Overlay District(s): N/A

Wetlands: ☐ Yes ☒ No Floodplain: ☐ Yes ☒ No

Comprehensive Plan: Governmental and Institutional / Low Density Residential

Background: The applicant is requesting site plan approval for a 0.241-acre ground-mounted solar array for Gifford School located at 8332 Northwestern Avenue. This type of accessory use is permitted in the R-3 District.

The applicant is proposing to construct a ground-mounted solar array with the capacity to generate 238kWdc/180kWac of energy. The applicant intends to start construction on the project in the fall of 2025, pending required permits and approvals. Construction of the project is expected to take approximately three to four months.

The location of this array is east of the Gifford School building, and it is part of a larger solar array system that includes the array installed on the rooftop of the school building. The proposed accessory use does not generate large volumes of traffic, pollution, or noise. Power generated by the entire system (including

rooftop and proposed ground-mounted array) will offset approximately 45% of the Gifford School building's electrical usage.

As illustrated on the site plan, the applicant is proposing to install a solar panel array on the east portion of the property located at 8332 Northwestern Avenue. The proposed array will comply with setback requirements for the R-3 Zoning District, with the street yard setback being greater than 30 feet from Northwestern Avenue; approximately 29 feet from the east lot line; 271 feet from the school building; and 360 feet from the south lot line.

The array consists of multiple solar panels that are at a fixed 25-degree angle. The tallest part of the panels is approximately 10 feet above ground level. The height of the solar panels complies with height restrictions for accessory structures in the R-3 District. As part of the system, there will be inverters located on the northwest corner of the array on a Unistrut rack. These ground equipment areas comply with setback requirements and will be partially screened by the proposed fencing and landscaping.

Access to the system is proposed through an existing paved path connecting to the sidewalk on Northwestern Avenue; this path aligns with a 20-foot swing maintenance gate.

The applicant is proposing a seven-foot black vinyl chain-link security fence, as illustrated in the documentation included in the packet. This design of fencing is not permitted in the R-3 District. Per Village Code, Title 15, Chapter 5, fences in residential districts must not exceed four feet in height in the street yard, and six feet in the side or rear yard. The Plan Commission has the discretion to allow additional height, up to eight feet, if deemed necessary for screening, security, or other relevant purposes.

No lighting is proposed; however, if any lighting is proposed, the applicant will need to receive Village approval prior to installation.

The site plan includes landscaping around the south and east perimeters of the fenced area, with a rhythmic planting of Fat Albert Spruce trees and Technito Arbor Vitaes bushes for screening from the roadway and adjacent properties. Three existing pine trees will be removed from the north side of the property, while two existing trees in front of the property will be maintained. Any grading of the site will require approval from the Village Engineering Department and must comply with Village Stormwater Management regulations.

The Fire Department has reviewed the proposed site layout and has no concerns. The Fire Department will continue to work with the applicant to ensure suitable emergency access throughout the site.

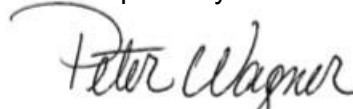
If the Plan Commission is comfortable the building, site, and operation plan, staff has drafted suggested motion.

Prepared by:



Natalia Nery de Farias
Planner & Zoning Administrator

Respectfully submitted:



Peter Wagner, AICP
Development Director