

Home / Maryland Independent / News / Local News

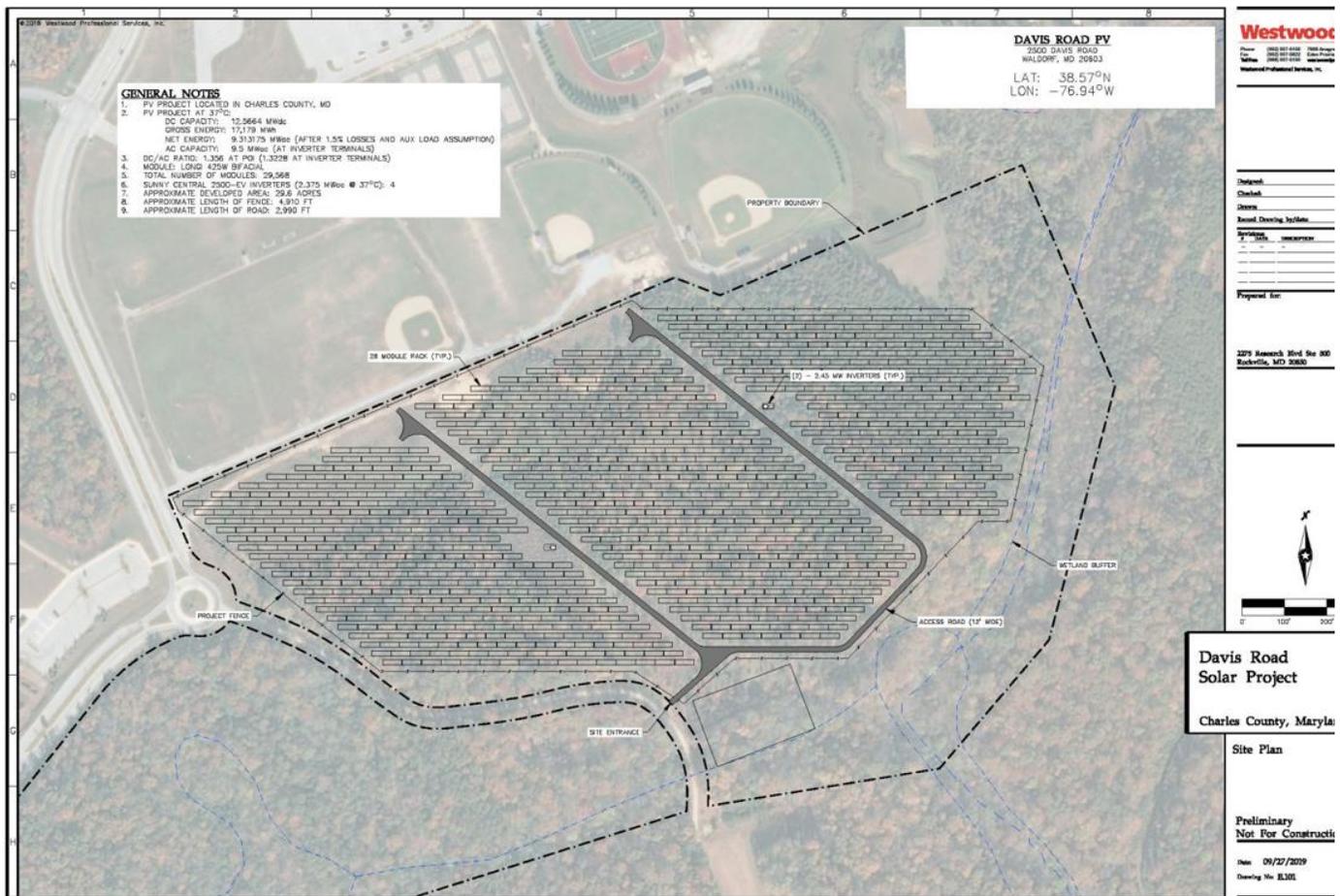
https://www.somdnews.com/independent/news/local/county-solar-projects-scheduled-for/article_e8993433-c4e7-5a7e-bf2a-03dd2d62c521.html

FEATURED TOP STORY

County solar projects scheduled for 2022

By Paul Lagasse plagasse@somdnews.com 3 hrs ago

1 of 2



County capital services chief John Stevens announced the county's plans to build a solar farm on a 101-acre parcel owned by the county across the street from Theodore G. Davis Middle School in Waldorf.

CHARLES COUNTY GOVERNMENT ILLUSTRATION

Two solar farms being planned on county land will supply all of the county government's electricity needs when completed in 2022, the Charles County Board of Commissioners learned Tuesday.

County capital services chief John Stevens announced that a partnership between solar energy developers Energy Ventures LLC and its partner X-ELIO will result in the construction of solar power stations on the site of the old county landfill in Pisgah and on Davis Road across from Theodore G. Davis Middle School.

The Pisgah landfill site is 101 acres and the solar power plant will produce just under 40,000 megawatt-hours of electricity annually. The Davis Road site is 96 acres, and its annual production will be 17,000 megawatt-hours. The energy output is expected to meet the county government's current daytime energy needs, and the county will have the option of selling the surplus energy generated by the two plants to provide a revenue stream for the county.

Both sites are owned by the county and will be leased to the developers at below-market rates.

Bradley Jefferies, Energy Ventures' founder, told the commissioners that the lease arrangement as well as the promise of expedited planning and zoning approval and a guarantee that the county will accept payment in lieu of taxes, a common arrangement for companies building on public land, made both projects attractive to his company.

"As we analyzed these projects, we have designed them so that they will minimize the cost and risk of development to the county," Jefferies said. "We as the developers will be shouldering all the responsibility for the development itself."

Under the terms of its contract, the energy partnership will build the plants and sell the energy produced to a “retail entity” that will, in turn, sell the electricity back to the county. Jefferies explained that the county would be purchasing a mix of electricity produced by the plant during the day and so-called “brown power” from conventional power sources at night when the solar farms won’t be operating.

“We understand it’s necessary for us to assist you in reducing the county’s energy expense, and not only in absolute terms but also to help reduce the volatility of energy expenses,” Jefferies said. “We see that as one of the important things that we will have to accomplish on your behalf.”

Jefferies said the company also identified the county’s desire to use its current real estate assets in ways that are sensitive to the environment and its desire to contract with minority business enterprises.

Energy Ventures is a service-disabled veteran-owned business formed in 2012 in Delaware. It was awarded the contract to build the two solar power plants after responding to a request for proposals issued by the county four years ago.

Stevens told the commissioners that eight companies responded to the RFP. The county entered into initial agreements with Energy Ventures and another company, but the second company bowed out due to what Stevens described as difficulties obtaining the necessary regulatory approvals.

“Energy Ventures has been working diligently behind the scenes for the last four years getting the proper approvals and coordinating with the various entities that’s necessary to do this program,” Stevens said.

The Pisgah landfill property is covered with grass, while the Davis Road site has sparse tree cover and some shrubs. As a result, the county does not expect that either project will negatively impact the county's overall forest cover. Earlier this year, the Maryland Department of the Environment denied permits to a private company seeking to build two solar farms in Charles County that opponents argued would have resulted in the loss of hundreds of acres of forest.

Energy Ventures and X-ELIO have undertaken a feasibility study with PJM Interconnection LLC, which operates the regional electric power transmission grid in Maryland and 12 other states and the District of Columbia, to get approval to connect both solar farms to the grid. Assuming that the projects clear all local, state and federal approval milestones, construction of the Davis Road and Pisgah plants should be completed in January and February 2020, respectively, and begin generating power the following months.

"The potential for this, I think, is extraordinary just in terms of putting the county in the position of actually generating energy," Commissioners' President Reuben B. Collins II (D) said following the presentation. "I think it's something that's certainly warranted."

Twitter: @PaulIndyNews

Twitter: @PaulIndyNews