

OLEAN TIMES HERALD

Solean solar project gets approval

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By CHRISTOPHER MICHEL, Olean Times Herald

OLEAN — A multimillion-dollar renewable energy project has received a green light.

Members of the Olean Planning Board on Wednesday approved Solean, the \$15 million solar power-generating facility that will be constructed by BQ Energy, a Poughkeepsie-based firm, later this summer. The facility is going on brownfield — dormant industrial land — off Buffalo Street near the city's northern line. In addition, the board determined the project will not have a negative impact on the environment.

During a final review of the project, Mary George, the city's Community Development coordinator, noted the Cattaraugus County Planning Board gave its approval of the project May 28 but did raise one concern — sunlight glare from nearly 24,000 solar panels that will be installed at the site.

Responding to that issue, Kim Nason, an attorney from the Phillips Lytle law firm that is representing BQ, said the solar panels are designed and installed to reduce glare.

"They actually have an anti-glare coating on them that actually helps them generate power more efficiently," Nason said. "The panels are also put up with a 30 degree tilt, which directs any glare upwards at a steep angle."

The panels will face south and not be able to reflect sunlight back toward Interstate 86, which runs along the property's northern side.

Should glare become an issue, BQ officials would take immediate action to correct the problem, she added.

The board's approval comes one day after the Olean Common Council made its own determination the project will not negatively impact the environment. The council also approved new zoning ordinances regulating solar power facilities within city limits during its legislative session Tuesday.

Construction of the power facility is still intended for this summer. Crews plan to install 23,900 solar panels, creating 1,330 arrays. Combined, the arrays are expected to generate 7.75 megawatts of power — enough energy to sustain 1,330 average homes for one year.

St. Bonaventure University will be the primary recipient of energy from the facility and will receive around \$100,000 in annual power credits from National Grid.

The solar power plant is being constructed on the back 33 acres of a 60-acre property where Krog Corp., an Orchard Park-based developer, plans to build a \$17 million hotel and retail complex. Construction of the complex, dubbed "Olean Gateway," is also set to start this summer and will be completed in phases by 2020.

Solean is one of 141 solar power projects across New York receiving tax incentives to develop through the NY Sun program, a \$1 billion initiative to spur solar power development across the state.