



## KITTITAS COUNTY COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT SERVICES

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“Building Partnerships – Building Communities”

### Staff Report

To: The Board of County Commissioners

From: Dan Carlson, AICP, Community Development Services Director

Date: January 3, 2018

RE: Consider Six-Month Extension of Moratorium on Applications for Solar Projects that Qualify as Major Alternative Energy Systems

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#### **Background**

On January 10, 2017, the Kittitas County Board of Commissioners placed a moratorium on applications for solar projects that qualify as major alternative energy systems due to increased interest in solar projects and concerns related to impacts to agricultural activities and surrounding land uses. This moratorium was placed in accordance with RCW 36.70A.390. On March 9, 2017, the Board conducted a public hearing to consider maintaining the moratorium for six months. After receiving and considering testimony at the public hearing, the Board decided to keep the moratorium effective for six months.

According to RCW 36.70A.390, a moratorium may be effective for up to one year if a work plan is developed for related studies providing for the longer period of time. On July 10, 2017, the Board conducted a public hearing to consider maintaining the moratorium for one year with an adopted work plan. After receiving and considering testimony at the public hearing, the Board decided to keep the moratorium in effect until January 10, 2018.

As a part of the work plan, the Solar Facilities Citizen Advisory Committee was formed. The committee has met six times and conducted one community open house. Siting criteria and regulations have been drafted, but are not yet ready for public hearing or adoption.

According to RCW 36.70A.390, a moratorium may be renewed for one or more six-month periods if a subsequent public hearing is held and findings of fact are made. A public hearing has been scheduled for January 3, 2017 at 6:00 p.m. to consider extending the moratorium.

#### **Analysis & Recommendation**

RCW 36.70A.390 allows for a moratorium to be renewed for one or more six month-month periods. The Solar Facilities Citizen Advisory Committee has conducted several meetings and one community open house in order to draft standards and criteria for siting of solar facilities, but the standards are not ready for hearing yet. Therefore, staff recommends that the Board extend the moratorium for six months or until standards and/or criteria for the siting of solar facilities are adopted, subject to the following findings:

1. A potentially high number of proponents for solar farms have shown interest in the development of solar energy systems within the Kittitas County valley.
2. Large numbers of large solar energy systems may have an impact upon the agricultural activity within the valley, which is a prime industry within the County.
3. The Board desires standards and/or criteria for the placement of such facilities.
4. A citizen advisory committee has been working on standards and siting criteria, but needs more time to complete its work.