

Machias Planning Board
Wednesday, January 7, 2026
Machias Tele-Business Building

Present: Chairman Harry Flower, James Jackson, Andrew Mulholland, Jacob Potter-Rivera, Arthur McCurdy, Alt. Dean Petruzzi, Town Manager Sarah Dedmon, CEO Betsy Fitzgerald, CFO Nicholas MacDonald, resident Mark Contard, MVNO's Paul Sylvain and Sean Murphy of Flycatcher representing Mid Coast Solar, Recording Secretary Sharon Mack.

Open Meeting: On a motion by Jim Jackson, second by Arthur McCurdy, the board

VOTED to open the meeting at 5 p.m.

Approval of Minutes: On a motion by Arthur McCurdy, second by Jim Jackson, the board

VOTED to accept the minutes of the November 5, 2025, meeting as presented.

Solar Farm Permit Application - Machias Solar Project. This is the first application to Machias since the solar ordinance was approved in December 3, 2025. Sean Murphy outlined the project: It will be located east of the airport near 241 Dublin Street, unseen from the road with an 8-foot tall security fence. The fence will have a gap at the base to allow for wildlife movement. The farm will have no wetland impact and is not crossing any streams or water. An existing gravel road will be used to access the farm during construction but then will be revegetated. There will be no battery storage on site and minimal downward lighting to allow for repairs. Sean Murphy said the farm is designed for community solar and still needs to obtain its Maine Dept. of Environmental Protection Permit. He also stated the meadow beneath the solar panels will be mowed twice a year.

The planners, using a large binder provided by Midcoast Solar Company, went through the permit checklist. Specific questions asked included:

1. Andrew Mulholland: How will it be maintained? Sean Murphy: Routine maintenance and mowing of the meadow.

2. Andrew Mulholland: Is there a decommissioning escrow in place? Sean Murphy: It will be once the project is approved. Nick MacDonald stated he was reviewing that section of the application for the town.

3. Andrew Mulholland: Is there a soils management plan in place?

Sean Murphy: It will be provided once the project is approved.

4. Jim Jackson: Will a historical finds assessment take place? Sean

Murphy: The property is above the elevation from the river where that is required, but if anything of importance is found during construction, work will stop immediately and state officials notified.

5. Andrew Mulholland: How were abutters and the public notified of the project? Sean Murphy: By registered mail and newspaper advertisements. A sign will also be placed at the property.

6. Andrew Mulholland: Will sound be an issue? Sean Murphy: Any sound within 50 feet will sound like the hum of a refrigerator, no louder.

The majority of discussion centered around possible glare and other effects to the abutting airport. Sean Murphy explained that the FAA application was submitted in December and could take up to three months to approve. He said the solar panels will be at a 25 percent tilt but does not expect glare to be an issue. The board asked Sarah Dedmon to arrange for the engineering firm for the airport to look at the glare issue. He said there could be no approval until the FAA report is received and the glare issue is resolved. Sean Murphy stated that no construction can take place without the FAA approval.

Since the farm has a proposed life span of 20-40 years, Andrew Mulholland asked that records of all actions be carefully kept and monitored moving into the future.

It was noted that Machias Fire Chief Joseph Thompson had not signed off on the project's emergency management plan. Sarah Dedmon said he would do that this week.

Midcoast Solar requested three waivers to the application process and they were approved. On a motion by Andrew Mulholland, second by Arthur McCurdy, the board

VOTED to approve a waiver of Section 6.5 which covers a punch list by the town's Code Enforcement Officer.

On a motion by Andrew Mulholland, second by Jim Jackson, the board **VOTED** to approve a waiver of Section 8.1.Y that allows the applicant to submit decommissioning security proof prior to construction and

once all approvals are in place, rather than when the application is submitted.

On a motion by Andrew Mulholland, second by Jim Jackson, the board **VOTED** to approve a waiver of Section 8.1.U. which requires notification of abutters, as this had been completed.

Sarah Dedmon noted that since this was the first solar application received under the new ordinance, the document should be considered fluid and as it is worked may need amendments. Sarah Dedmon also reiterated that the board would require certified mail receipts from abutter notifications and the Fire Chief's approval of the Emergency Management Plan, as well as the FAA final report. It was also agreed to hold a public hearing before the final vote.

Andrew Mulholland also asked that the board hold future discussions to create an ordinance regulating AI centers.

The board adjourned at 6:34 p.m.