

Manatí solar project wins approval

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The Planning Board announced Tuesday the approval of a 20-megawatt solar energy project in Manatí that will be connected to the Puerto Rico Electric Power Authority (Prepa) power grid.

Planning Board President Luis García Pelatti said the approved site permit has won the endorsements of the concerned agencies and complies with legal requisites and the criteria established by recent executive orders by Gov. Alejandro García Padilla that renewable energy projects don't impact agricultural land or natural resources. That's why it won approval from the Department of Natural & Environmental Resources and the Agriculture Department.

The project site, on PR-670 in Barrio Coto Sur, has an established right-of-way that will guarantee a connection to Prepa's grid. That meets a requirement by the Department of Transportation & Public Works, García Pelatti said.

"The approval of this type of project represents a path for renewable energy sources to reduce electricity cost and lower the dependence on oil," the Planning Board chief said, emphasizing that such projects need to meet regulations.

"Currently, there are 17 renewable energy site permits under evaluation. Once the evaluation is complete, the Planning Board will emit its determination," he added.

Under the previous administration, Prepa entered into power purchase agreements with 63 renewable energy projects that represent a \$5 billion investment that could create 18,000 new jobs.

Prepa Executive Director Juan Alicea Flores has complained about the prices in the contracts and said he would attempt to renegotiate terms on projects that win approval. He also said that Prepa's antiquated electric grid cannot handle the interconnection of all the projects with which the public corporation contracted.