MESA COUNTY

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

PLANNING DIVISION

200 S. Spruce Street • PO Box 20,000-5022 • Grand Junction, Colorado 81502
Telephone: 970-244-1636 • www.mesacounty.us

NOTICE OF MESA COUNTY PUBLIC HEARINGS
PLANNING COMMISSION: December 17, 2026 at 6:00 p.m.
BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS: January 19, 2027 at 1:30 p.m.
All hearings are held in the Mesa County Courthouse, Public Hearing Room, 544 Rood Avenue, Second Floor, Grand Junction, CO 81501.

PRO2026-0082 WAM 1 SOLAR PROJECT CONDITIONAL USE PERMIT

Property Owner: WPI II GV8 Farm CO, LLC
Representative: CBEP CA 7, LLC
Location: 1121 21 Road, Grand Junction, 81505 (K Road and 21 Road)
Parcel: 2697-114-00-770
Zoning: AFT (Agricultural, Forestry, Transitional)
Planner: Faye Hall, 970-244-1759, faye.hall@mesacounty.us
Request: To locate a 5-megawatt agrivoltaics solar facility on the west 23 acres of the property for phase one.

Web Notification Date: November 16, 2026
Publication Date: November 18, 2026

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PROJECT REVIEW
November 16, 2026

PRO2026-0082 CUP WAM 1 SOLAR PROJECT CONDITIONAL USE PERMIT

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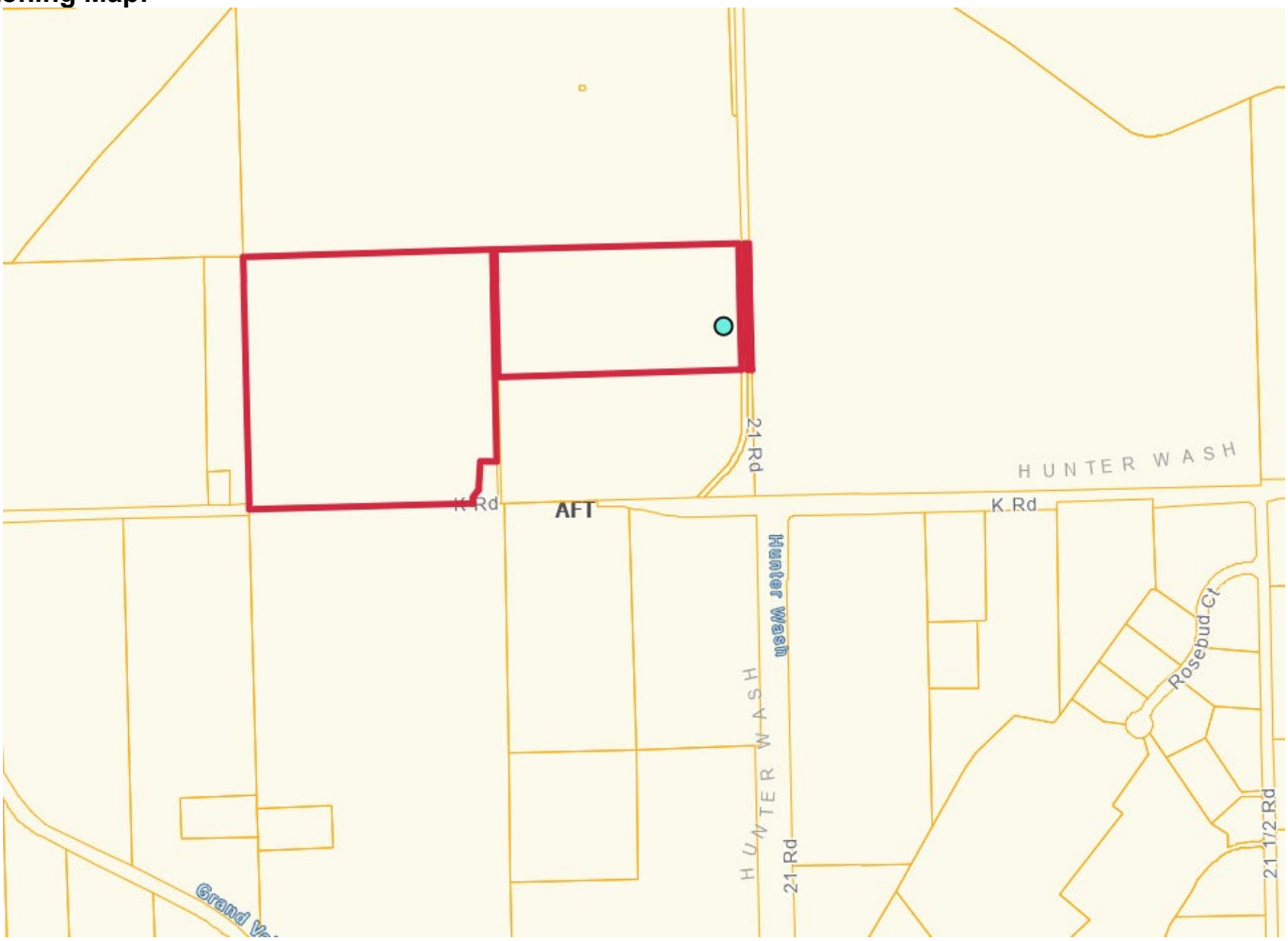
Request:	To locate a 5-megawatt agrivoltaics solar facility on the west 23 acres of the property for phase one.

Staff Recommendation: Approval with conditions

Zoning Map:



I. SURROUNDING ZONING DISTRICTS, FUTURE LAND USE DESIGNATIONS, AND LAND USES

DIRECTION FROM SUBJECT PROPERTY	CURRENT ZONING	FUTURE LAND USE	CURRENT LAND USES
North	Agricultural, Forestry, Transitional (AFT)	Rural/Agricultural 10 (R/A 10)	Low-Density Residential Agricultural
South	Agricultural, Forestry, Transitional (AFT)	Rural/Agricultural 10 (R/A 10)	Low-Density Residential Agricultural
East	Agricultural, Forestry, Transitional (AFT)	Rural	Low-Density Residential Agricultural
West	Agricultural, Forestry, Transitional (AFT)	Rural/Agricultural 10 (R/A 10)	Low-Density Residential Agricultural

Zoning within the 2,500-foot public notification area:

- AFT

Current land uses within the 2,500-foot public notification area:

- Low-density residential
- Agriculture

Applicable Land Use Plan:

- Mesa County Master Plan

II. PROJECT SITE DESCRIPTION

The WAM 1 Solar Project is a proposed 5 megawatt (MWac) solar energy generation facility located due east of Fruita, Colorado, just north of the K Road and 21 Road intersection. Serving as the first phase of a larger two-phase development, WAM 1 features an approximate 23-acre solar footprint on a 26.39-leased area within a 58.5 acre parcel. Pursuant to Table 6-1 in the Mesa County 2020 Land Development Code, as amended, solar energy development projects are considered utility production facilities and require a conditional use permit to operate in the AFT zoning district.

A. PROPOSAL

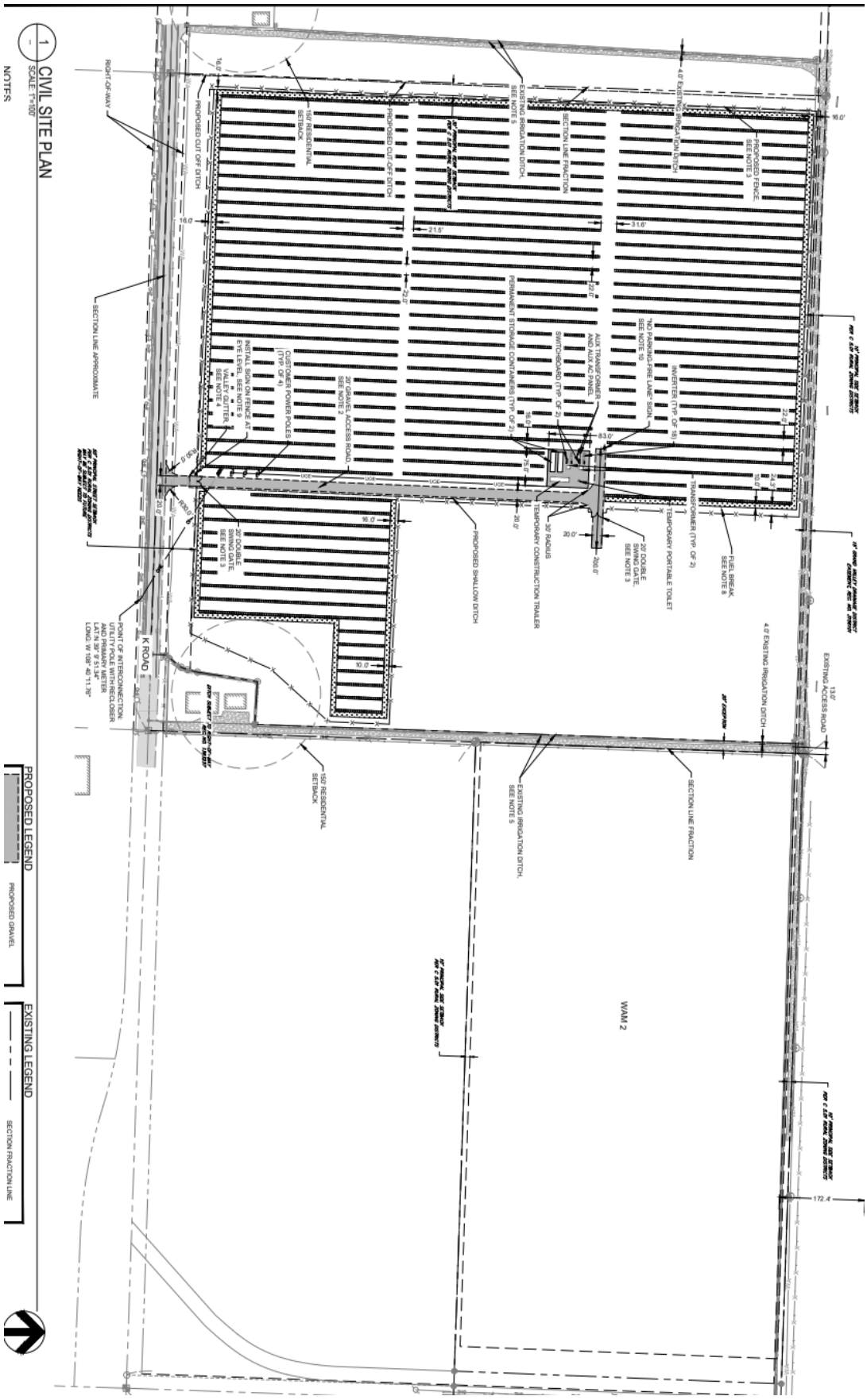
This application was originally submitted as an agrivoltaics project, which would have allowed the project to be processed as a Site Plan Review that proposed a sheep grazing management plan for the agrivoltaics use. Mesa County did not find that sheep grazing management on a parcel of land with no irrigation water would suffice as an agrivoltaics use. Therefore discussions with the applicant led to the requirement of a Conditional Use Permit since the site was being proposed to be used for energy generation and not for agrivoltaics use. The application is now processed as a Conditional Use Permit. This facility will include 9,825 solar modules and will be accessed via a new 1,080-foot gravel road connecting to K Road to the south. Panels maintain a minimum 5 foot clearance above grade with a maximum overall height of 11.5 feet at full tilt; no equipment or ancillary structure exceeds this height. Ancillary facilities include two permanent storage containers, one temporary construction trailer, underground electrical conduit, and a 7-foot security game fencing. The facility will interconnect to the electrical distribution system operated by Xcel Energy and has a rated capacity of 6,032 kW DC (approximately 6.03MWp) and 5,000 kW AC (5.00 MWac). The proposal produces no emissions and no process-water discharge. The site is fenced and unmanned and emergency access is provided via

a Knox Box for the Lower Valley Fire Department. An existing Grand Valley District irrigation canal follows the east and west perimeters of the site, which will be protected and maintained throughout the project's life. An agricultural use will be used instead of utilizing traditional industrial paving. The land beneath and around the solar panels will be seeded with a native dryland seed mix to promote a diverse plant community and natural stormwater dispersion. Once the native vegetation is established, the facility will introduce a managed sheep grazing system in partnership with a local shepherd. The sheep will act as a natural vegetation management method to prevent the panels from being shaded by tall growth. Water for sheep will be trucked in as needed. This dual-use approach reduces the need for heavy mowing equipment, lowers the risk of fire, diversifies agricultural revenue, and improves local soil health over the project's expected 40-year lifespan. Traffic generation will be limited to 1-2 maintenance trips per quarter plus as-needed visits by the local shepherd. The project is setback sufficiently so that no landscape screening is required to protect neighboring residences. The expected operating life is approximately 40 years and has a Decommissioning Report which provides full decommissioning procedures. Upon end of useful life or permanent cessation of operations, all solar arrays, inverters, transformers, electrical distribution equipment, conduit and conductors, fencing, gates, storage containers, and the gravel access road will be removed and the site restored to a condition as close as practical to pre-development conditions, including de-compaction and re-application of topsoil and re-seeding to re-establish agricultural use. The full decommission and site-restoration process is estimated to be completed within approximately 40 weeks. Upon review of the application a 20 foot exception was noted that runs north to south through the middle of the property. The applicant is working to correct this and a condition of approval is being required for this 20 foot exception to be corrected prior to any building permits being issued. It appears that this was a result of this portion of the property not being deeded correctly in the past. The applicant is currently working to correct this and anticipates that a solution is forthcoming.

2022 Aerial Photo:



Site Plan:


CIVIL SITE PLAN
SCALE: 1"=100'
NOTES
PROPOSED LEGEND
PROPOSED GRAVEL
EXISTING LEGEND
SECTION FRACTION LINE
RIGHT-OF-WAY
PROPOSED CUT OFF DITCH
150' RESIDENTIAL SETBACK
PROPOSED CUT-OFF DITCH
EXISTING IRRIGATION DITCH, SEE NOTE 5
SECTION LINE FRACTION
4.0' EXISTING IRRIGATION DITCH
PROPOSED FENCE, SEE NOTE 3
SECTION LINE APPROXIMATE
PERMANENT STORAGE CONTAINERS (TYP. OF 2)
AUX TRANSFORMER AND AUX AC PANEL
SWITCHBOARD (TYP. OF 2)
"NO PARKING-FIRE LANE" SIGN, SEE NOTE 10
INVERTER (TYP. OF 18)
CUSTOMER POWER POLES (TYP. OF 4)
INSTALL SIGN ON FENCE AT EYE LEVEL, SEE NOTE 9
VALLEY GUTTER, SEE NOTE 4
20' GRAVEL ACCESS ROAD, SEE NOTE 2
TRANSFORMER (TYP. OF 2)
TEMPORARY PORTABLE TOILET
FUEL BREAK, SEE NOTE 8
20' DOUBLE SWING GATE, SEE NOTE 3
30' RADIUS
TEMPORARY CONSTRUCTION TRAILER
PROPOSED SHALLOW DITCH
20' DOUBLE SWING GATE, SEE NOTE 3
POINT OF INTERCONNECTION: UTILITY POLE WITH RECLOSER AND PRIMARY METER
K ROAD
EXISTING ACCESS ROAD
4.0' EXISTING IRRIGATION DITCH
150' RESIDENTIAL SETBACK
EXISTING IRRIGATION DITCH, SEE NOTE 5
SECTION LINE FRACTION
WAM 2

III. MESA COUNTY MASTER PLAN

The updated Mesa County Master Plan was adopted by the Mesa County Planning Commission on May 18, 2023. Goal 6 of the plan, *Support Energy Development*, states "support diversity of energy industries including…alternative production" and includes strategies that "support continued development and investment in solar photovoltaics to increase the resiliency of Mesa County's energy infrastructure and diversify the energy market" and "encourage renewable energy sources that reduce the reliance on imported water for the energy industry."

IV. COMPLIANCE WITH MESA COUNTY CODE REQUIREMENTS

Section 4.03, 6.02.CC and Section 3.09 of the Mesa County 2020 Land Development Code, as amended, were used to evaluate this application.

Section 4.03.C of the LDC states "In evaluating the proposal, the request shall be consistent with the General Approval Criteria under Section 3.09 and the following shall be considered:"

A. The proposed use is not significantly different from adjacent uses in terms of appearance, site design, or operating characteristics.

The proposed solar facility would comprise approximately 9,825 solar modules standing at 11.5 feet at full tilt above grade. This facility would create unavoidable visual impacts on the landscape. There is very low-density residential development surrounding the proposed project site. The surrounding area is characterized by agricultural uses and does have some neighboring residences. It will be unmanned and will retain a managed sheep grazing operation for vegetation control. While this use is consistent with the rural and agricultural use of adjacent properties, the visual component and operating characteristics of a solar generation facility are not consistent with the surrounding area.

This criterion cannot be met.

B. Any adverse impacts resulting from the use (including but not limited to hours of operation, traffic generation, noise, odor, dust, and other external impacts) will be mitigated to the maximum extent practical.

Hours of Operation
Construction of the operation would be limited to daytime working hours and would be temporary until construction is complete. The facility will be in operation seven days a week during daytime hours when construction is complete.

Traffic
During the active construction window, the site will generate temporary construction traffic, including deliveries of modules, racking, and equipment, and daily worker trips, routed via the 20 foot wide gravel access road connecting to K Road to the south 1,080 linear feet. Construction activity will be limited to standard daytime working hours. Upon completion, the operating facility is unmanned and generates only 1-2 maintenance trips per quarter plus as-needed shepherd visits. No permanent increase in area traffic will result.

Noise
This type of facility is known to generate a very limited amount of noise. No routine noise beyond minor inverter operations, which is set back sufficiently from neighboring residences. Such noise levels are not expected to exceed those considered acceptable pursuant to state statute.

Odor
Operation of the proposed facility would not cause odors.

Dust
During the construction phase of the project, construction activity on and traffic to and from the site could generate some dust, which should be minimal. Construction phase impacts would be temporary. Upon completion, no generation of dust is anticipated. The site will be seeded and will have managed sheep grazing for long term vegetation control, which will help to minimize dust.

Lighting
No outdoor light fixtures are proposed. Any outdoor lighting must comply with Section 8.07.F of the Mesa County Land Development Code.

This criterion can be met.

C. Public facilities and services shall be available upon completion of the project to serve the subject property.

The facility requires no municipal water or sewer service. A temporary construction trailer will be provided during construction of the project along with a temporary portable toilet. Water for sheep is trucked in as needed and maintenance waste is managed on a pack-in/pack-out basis. Emergency access is assured through a Knox Box provided at the K Road gate for the Lower Valley Fire Department. Electric interconnection service will be provided by Xcel Energy and will be available upon completion. All public facilities and services necessary to serve the property will be available upon completion.

This criterion can be met with conditions of approval.

Section 6.02.CC Utility, Production
The following standards shall apply to all new energy production facilities to regulate the development and surface impacts that these facilities may have on the public health, safety, and welfare.

a. Narrative
A narrative was provided

b. The applicant will provide a narrative describing the proposed facility including but not limited to; general descriptions of the proposal, the height and location of the equipment and ancillary structure, health and safety, decommissioning, traffic analysis, construction schedule, type and location of interconnection, rated capacity.
The provide narrative provides this information

c. Site Plan shall be provided in a legible format and shall include but not be limited to the location and arrangement of screening, fencing, existing and proposed structures, equipment, roadways, and access points, wildlife corridors, floodplain, easements, existing utilities, and connection to the electrical grid.
The Site Plan provided shows that screening is met due to setback requirements, has a 7 foot tall game fencing proposed around the property for security. Shows location of proposed structures and equipment and access location along with setbacks from existing residences.

d. Setbacks
The site is not located within a ¼ mile from a Colorado designated Scenic By-way or from the Palisade Fruit and Vine Byway and is located at least 150 feet from the nearest outside wall of a residentially occupied structure.

e. Fire Prevention and Safety Procedures

The facility is meeting the Lower Valley Fire Protections District's adopted standards. A 10 foot fire break is proposed around the entirety of the project site. A vegetation management plan has been described to maintain vegetation inside the facility which includes sheep grazing management with potential mowing if necessary. The Lower Valley Fire Department has reviewed the submitted Fire Management Plan and found that it met their requirements.

f. Visual Mitigation

The proposed solar equipment will be a maximum overall height of 11.5 feet at full tilt. None of the solar facilities will be located within 50 feet of a property line of a residentially zoned property. Agricultural use of sheep grazing will be used for property management.

g. Wildlife, Wetlands, Riparian Areas and Stream Channel Measures

No recommendations from Colorado Parks and Wildlife were made as this site will not be located within a wildlife corridor. The site is not located in a wetlands or riparian area. A 7 foot wildlife game fence will be used around the perimeter of the site.

h. Decommissioning Plan

Upon end of useful life or permanent cessation of operations, all solar arrays, inverters, transformers, electrical distribution equipment, conduit and conductors, fencing, gates, storage containers, and the gravel access road will be removed and the site restored to a condition as close as practical to pre-development conditions, including de-compaction and re-application of topsoil and re-seeding to re-establish agricultural use. The full decommission and site-restoration process is estimated to be completed within approximately 40 weeks.

i. Utility interconnection

Electric interconnection service will be provided by Xcel Energy and will be available upon completion. A condition of approval will be required to provide an interconnection agreement with final details prior to construction of the facility.

j. Insurance

Proof of general liability insurance with commercially reasonable amounts of coverage for the permitted facility will be provided as a condition of approval prior to construction and will remain in place through all times the facility is in operation.

Approval Criteria;

In evaluating the proposal, the request shall consider conditions of approval and all applicable requirements of this Land Development Code, including, but not limited to:

a. The health, safety and welfare of the citizens of this jurisdiction will be protected and served;

The facility is fenced and unmanned, all equipment is installed to applicable codes and utility standards, and emergency access is provided via a Knox Box for the Lower Valley Fire Department. Managed grazing reduces fire fuel load and a 10 foot fire break surrounds the site. The facility produces no emissions and no process-water discharge.

This criterion can be met.

b. The facility will not unreasonably impact the physical, economic, or social environment, except as permitted in Chapter 6 Use Regulations as applicable.

The facility is located on unoccupied land with no existing structures. There are a limited number of residences within the area and a large agricultural use to the north. The use of sheep grazing management will continue the agricultural use of the area. The location of the facility should not unreasonably impact the physical, economic or social environment of the area.

This criterion can be met.

c. **When an impact is expected to occur, reasonable modifications and programs and other reasonable mitigating actions will be implemented and maintained to minimize the degree of adversity of the impact;**
There will be a slight stormwater runoff increase conveyed by a roadside ditch and concrete valley gutter; the irrigation canal is protected throughout construction; and temporary construction traffic is confined to daytime hours. A 10 foot fire break is proposed to surround the site and will have a 7 foot wildlife game fence to keep wildlife out and for security to the site. The facility is meeting the setback requirements for distances from existing residences in the area.

This criterion can be met.

d. **There exists a need, or a reasonably foreseeable need, for the facility as proposed.**
There is both a present and reasonably foreseeable need for the facility. Electricity demand within Xcel Energy's Colorado service territory continues to grow, and distributed renewable generation sited near existing distribution infrastructure helps meet that demand while reducing transmission losses. The facility also advances Colorado's renewable-energy policy goals, including the State's statutory targets for clean and renewable electricity generation. By delivering approximately 5 MW of renewable capacity into the local distribution system, the project responds directly to this established and foreseeable need.

This criterion can be met.

Section 3.09 of the Land Development Code, General Approval Criteria, must also be considered when reviewing conditional use permit requests:

A. Complies with all applicable standards, provisions, and Purpose (Section 1.05) of this Land Development Code

This criterion can be met with conditions of approval.

B. Is consistent with review agency comments

Review agency comments are addressed with the recommended conditions of approval.

This criterion can be met with conditions of approval.

C. Is consistent with applicable intergovernmental agreements between the County and other entities

The application is consistent with the Master Plan policies and goals and is located within the Fruita Co-operative agreement area

This criterion has been met.

V. REVIEW AGENCY COMMENTS

All review agency comments can be met and are a part of the project file and hearing binder.

VI. PUBLIC COMMENTS

As of the date of this report, the Planning Division has received five comment letters. These letters were all received when the project was proposed as an agrivoltaics facility. The project has not received any comment letters since it was proposed as a energy generation facility that requires a Conditional Use Permit.

At the applicant's request, an upcoming neighborhood meeting will be held to inform neighboring properties about the application and answer any questions. Please note that this meeting is being hosted by the applicant and is not a County requirement. This meeting will be held at the Mesa County Central Services Building on December 8, 2026 from 5pm to 7pm.

VII. STAFF RECOMMENDATION

The Planning Division recommends approval of the WAM 1 Solar Facility Conditional Use Permit Amendment application as submitted, subject to the following conditions:

1) All review agency comments not in conflict with the following conditions of approval shall be addressed.
2) The applicants, owner, and operator shall not significantly deviate from the site plan and documents submitted with this application. Any modification or expansion of this facility, not including minor modifications as determined by the Community Development Director, shall require an amendment of the conditional use permit.
3) An interconnection agreement with final details must be submitted prior to construction of the facility.
4) The owner/operator shall provide proof of general liability insurance with commercially reasonable amounts of coverage for the permitted facility. Insurance shall be maintained in place through all times the facility is in operation
5) Dust-abatement measures shall be employed during construction.
6) The applicants, owner, and operator shall adhere to the noise limit requirements of Colorado Revised Statutes Section 25-12-103.
7) Any site lighting shall be unobtrusive, and flood lights shall not be used on the project site. Lighting fixtures shall be full cut-off and in accordance with Section 8.07.F of the Mesa County 2020 Land Development Code, as amended. Nighttime lighting shall not be used unless personnel are on site performing maintenance, emergency repairs, or inspections.
8) Signage shall be limited to an identification or notification sign located at the approved access point and meet signage requirements of the Mesa County Land Development Code.
9) Within twelve months of the end of its operational life, the facility shall be decommissioned and the solar modules, inverters, transformers, structural steel and aluminum, concrete, fencing, and all other materials associated with the facility shall be removed from the site.
10) A commercial site plan shall be submitted and approval obtained prior to construction to ensure compliance with the conditional use permit.
11) The 20 foot exception that runs through the middle of the property shall be resolved upon completion of the Site Plan Review and prior to issuance of a building permit.

The basis for this staff recommendation:

The application demonstrates compliance with criteria in Section 4.03, 6.02.CC and Section 3.09 of the Mesa County 2020 Land Development Code, as amended, with the recommended conditions of approval.

Summary of Basis of Recommendation

	CUP Criteria 4.03	Finding	Conditions
A	Proposed use not significantly different from adjacent uses	Cannot be met	1,2,7
B	Adverse impacts will be mitigated	Can be met	5,6,7

C	Facilities and services are available	Can be met	3,10
	General Approval Criteria 3.09	Finding	
A	Compliance the Land Development Code	Can be met	1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9,10
B	Consistency with review agency comments	Can be met	1,3,4,11
C	Consistency with IGAs	Has been met	

VIII. Planning Commission Hearing: December 17, 2026

IX. Board of County Commissioners Hearing: January 19, 2027