

Committee on Regulated Industries

CS/CS/SB 896 — Renewable Energy

by Rules Committee; Regulated Industries Committee; and Senators Brodeur and Hutson

The bill requires solar facilities to be a permitted use in all agricultural land use categories in a local government's comprehensive plan and all agricultural zoning districts within an unincorporated area. Under the bill, such facilities are required to comply with certain criteria including setback and landscaped buffer areas and counties may adopt ordinances specifying buffer and landscaping requirements. However, such requirements may not exceed those of similar uses in agricultural land use categories and zoning districts. The bill provides that s. 163.3205, F.S., as created by the bill, relating to solar facility approval process, is not applicable to any site that was the subject of an application to construct a solar facility submitted to a local governmental entity before July 1, 2021.

Additionally, the bill expands the term "renewable energy," and adds the terms "biogas" and "renewable natural gas." "Renewable energy," is expanded to mean electrical energy produced from a method that uses one or more of the following fuels or energy sources: hydrogen produced or resulting from energy sources other than fossil fuels, biomass, solar energy, geothermal energy, wind energy, ocean energy, and hydroelectric power. "Biogas," is defined as a mixture of gases, largely comprised of carbon dioxide, hydrocarbons, and methane gas, that is produced by the biological decomposition of organic materials. "Renewable natural gas" is defined as anaerobically generated biogas, landfill gas, or wastewater treatment gas, which is refined to a methane content of 90 percent or more, that may be used as transportation fuel, for electric generation, or is of a quality capable of being injected into a natural gas pipeline.

The bill provides that the Public Service Commission may approve cost recovery by a gas public utility for renewable natural gas purchase contracts in which the pricing provisions exceed the current market price of natural gas, but which are otherwise deemed reasonable and prudent by the commission.

The bill includes conforming changes in ss. 366.92, 373.236, and 403.973, F.S., to reflect the revised definition of "renewable energy" and reenacts s. 288.9606(7), F.S., without modification, to incorporate the changes made to s. 366.91, F.S.

If approved by the Governor, these provisions take effect July 1, 2021.

Vote: Senate 25-14; House 86-29