

Here's a breakdown of why people would have a problem with the Portland Maine Roman Catholic Diocese cutting mature trees in a cemetery without a permit to rent the land to a solar farm company:

1. Disrespect for the Cemetery's Sacred Nature

- Cemeteries are seen as sacred, permanent resting places, not commercial land.
- Turning burial grounds or adjacent land into a for-profit solar farm — even temporarily — may feel disrespectful to families with loved ones buried there.
- Even if the panels aren't placed directly on graves, altering cemetery grounds for commercial use often clashes with public expectations about how burial spaces should be maintained.

2. Cutting Mature Trees Without Permission

- Mature trees, especially in cemeteries, contribute to the peace, beauty, and historic character of the area.
- Removing them without a permit signals disregard for local environmental regulations and community input.
- Many see trees in cemeteries as part of a natural legacy that honors the dead — not as an obstacle to profit.

3. Environmental Concerns Beyond Solar Panels

- While solar energy is generally seen as positive, cutting down mature trees for solar panels can feel contradictory.
- Trees offer long-term carbon sequestration, habitat, and stormwater benefits.
- Once cut, they take decades to replace, whereas solar panels have a limited lifespan.

4. Lack of Transparency and Community Engagement

- Doing this without proper permits suggests decisions were made behind closed doors, excluding the local community.
- People may worry this sets a precedent for institutions bypassing regulations for financial gain.
- It fosters distrust between residents, the church, and the city.

5. Commercialization of Sacred or Public Spaces

- Even a five-year lease to a solar company is seen by some as prioritizing profit over the cemetery's primary purpose.
- Once commercial activity is introduced, it raises concerns about further non-cemetery uses creeping in over time.

6. Slippery Slope Concerns

- Residents may worry: If they get away with this, what comes next?
- People fear that more land could be leased, sold, or altered, changing the cemetery's character permanently.

In Summary:

While renewable energy is generally supported, the method matters. Cutting mature trees without permits on cemetery land, for private financial gain, touches nerves around:

- ✓ Respect for the dead
- ✓ Environmental protection
- ✓ Community process
- ✓ Institutional accountability