

MINUTES OF THE LIVINGSTON COUNTY
REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING
HELD ON MARCH 5, 2018, STARTING AT 7:00 PM
IN THE LIVINGSTON COUNTY HISTORIC COURTHOUSE
112 W. MADISON ST. PONTIAC, ILLINOIS

Chairman Mike Haberkorn called the meeting to order and roll call was taken.

Those present were: Jerry Gaspardo, Mike Haberkorn, Rudy Piskule, Verne Taylor, Dee Woodburn, Shane Long, Luke Bartlett, Scott Cranford and John Slagel

Those absent were: Eddie Hoerner, Keith Bahler and Scott Sand.

APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA:

Chairman Haberkorn mentioned the agenda to this meeting. With no recommendations for additions or amendments to the agenda for this March 5, 2018 meeting, Verne Taylor moved, seconded by Scott Cranford, that the agenda for this meeting be approved as presented. This motion was unanimously approved by voice vote.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Minutes of the August 28, 2017 meeting were mentioned by Chair Haberkorn. Dee Woodburn then moved, seconded by Jerry Gaspardo, that these minutes be approved as presented. This motion was unanimously approved by voice vote.

BUSINESS:

The zoning administrator provided copies of the Livingston County Comprehensive Plan to the regional planning commission members present at this meeting.

The zoning administrator remarked to the planning commission members that he did not intend on them making any recommendations at this meeting on Livingston County Zoning Cases SU-2-18 and SU-3-18, due to the amount of information provided on these proposed solar farms. He would like for the planning commission members to review the information on this applications, before making a recommendation at a future meeting. The zoning administrator then provided copies of the Livingston County regulations regarding solar farms to the planning commission members. The zoning administrator then presented copies of the special use application packet information.

Case SU-2 -18 – This zoning case pertains to a review of a request by Cypress Creek Renewables, LLC for a special use pertaining to the proposed Threshermen Solar, LLC, solar energy facility, in an AG, Agriculture, District. The subject property in this zoning case is a tract of land approximately 30 acres in size, located in Section 26 of Esmen Township. It was noted that Planning Commission member Dee Woodburn is one of the owners of the subject property in this zoning case.

The zoning administrator provided copies of the narrative summary for this proposed solar energy project, along with copies of the proposed solar farm facility Livingston County Special Use Permit Application Plan Set.

Copies of other support documentation was also provided to the regional planning commission members, including information on Cypress Creek, Operations and Maintenance, Solar Farm Development and Operation, ground mounted solar photovoltaic systems, Cypress Creek standard signage sheets, and Eco Cat assessment documents. Installation Guide information was also made available to the planning commission members.

Case SU-3-18 - This zoning case pertains to a review of a request by Cypress Creek Renewables, LLC for a special use pertaining to the proposed Miacomet Solar, LLC, solar energy facility, in an AG, Agriculture, District. The subject property in this zoning case is a tract of land approximately 25 acres in size, located in Section 21 of Newtown Township. The potential of a living fence along Route 17 was explained by the zoning administrator. The zoning administrator provided copies of the narrative summary for this proposed solar energy project, along with copies of the proposed solar farm facility Livingston County Special Use Permit Application Plan Set. Copies of other non-duplicative materials were also presented to the regional planning commission members, including a preliminary drainage study and a PV module technology document.

Mark Nora project attorney and Matt Kauffman representing Cypress Creek Renewables commented on the project. Matt Kauffman made a quick overview, starting by relating that Cypress Creek Renewables is one of the larger developers of solar energy in the United States. Mr. Kauffman related that they have been aggressive in pursuing solar projects in Illinois, because it is a sunny state. Mr. Kauffman commented on the growth of solar energy. Mr. Kauffman then commented on the Illinois Future Jobs Act which has some specific Illinois methods to utilize renewable energy in Illinois. Mr. Kauffman mentioned that they are considering both fixed mount solar panels and a tracking solar panel system. Mr. Kauffman mentioned security fencing planned to be placed around the facility. The equipment for the project is not large and should not have an impact on the roads in that it will come in on standard truck loads, during the proposed construction of these sites. Mr. Kauffman explained that steel posts would be driven into the ground, the modules will be 3.5 by 6 feet, and that inverters and a transformer will be part of the proposed project. The electricity will be put onto the grid. Mr. Kauffman then addressed the use of farm land. Mr. Kauffman remarked that with little concrete being part of the project they maintain soil permeability, and they will repair and replace any damaged field tiles. They like to cover the ground with Illinois native grasses, and they can consider pollinator mixes, and they are open to feedback from the local citizens on what to use for ground cover. In the end the project can be taken out and the property can be put back into production. Mr. Kauffman mentioned that the inverter and transformer are to be located in the center of the project, since they make a humming noise and being in the center of the project you cannot hear the noise at the perimeter of the project. No lights will be located on the facility. The project is totally engineered. Regarding the two proposed projects Mr. Kauffman noted that both sites are approximately 30 acres in size, and they will produce about 2 megawatts of energy, enough to serve about 321 homes each. These projects do not need any utilities. Mr. Kauffman then referred to the economics of the projects.

The planning commission then asked some questions, beginning with long term jobs. Mr. Kauffman mentioned that the projects are mostly self-sustained. Cypress Creek will have an operations center in Illinois that can monitor the sites. On site jobs is primarily ground keeping. In the end there will not be a lot of local jobs long term. Maintenance issues were discussed. Mr. Kauffman described the basics about how the panels produce electricity. Mr. Kauffman mentioned that the panels are made all over the world including the US and China. Mr. Kauffman noted the tariff has recently proposed and they will need to see how that works out. Mr. Kauffman indicated that the panels have a 25 year guaranteed. Mr. Kauffman was asked about how many sun days there are in a year in Illinois. Mr. Kauffman did not have that answer off hand. Mr. Kauffman then mentioned the production cost per kilowatt is now comparable to traditionally produced energy. Mr. Kauffman related how the State of Illinois is focusing on the 2 megawatt size of farms, of which they are focused.

Mr. Kauffman confirmed that the power produced will go into the grid, in lines adjacent to the property. Mr. Kauffman then discussed the off-site monitoring, and about how issues at a solar facility can be dealt with, such as transformer leakage. Mr. Kauffman mentioned that some mechanisms are built into the system to monitor its' operation. Regular visits to the site will also be made. They will rely on rain to clean the panels. A question was asked as to if the site to be north of the Pontiac Airport would cause a problem with glare.

Mr. Kauffman responded that they complete a FAA air study, and he is not aware of any solar farm being denied. The solar panels are made of black glass to soak in the sunlight and the panels are coated to prevent glare. Pollinator mix as a planting option was then discussed as a potential to place on the soil on the projects. Mr. Kauffman then discussed about how they are designed to sustain high winds. Power purchase agreements were then discussed. Mr. Kauffman replied that they need to have zoning and be well along with their interconnection agreements, before they can finalize any power purchase agreements. Mr. Kauffman then mentioned that Illinois is planning on having a procurement procedure later this year, and about how community solar power purchase may also be an option. Mr. Kauffman noted that the sites are about 30 acres in size to comply of the State of Illinois requirements. No buildings are to be located on the property. Transformer leakage prevention was discussed. Assessment of the sites was then discussed, including a discussion on how the state is looking at similar assessment process similar to wind energy assessment. This project is not to be built this year, but possibly in 2019. They would plan to build the two sites concurrently. Limits of projects in Illinois were then discussed. Mr. Kauffman then noted the state would like to have 25% renewable energy by 2030, but he is not sure how many solar projects would fit in to this goal.

OTHER BUSINESS:

The planning commission members were informed of the Livingston County Board approved status of text amendment pertaining to the Livingston County Wind Energy Regulations.

A review was done regarding the meeting calendar of 2018.

PUBLIC COMMENT: None

INFORMATIONAL UPDATE:

The planning commission members present were informed that their next meeting is scheduled for Monday April 2nd at 7:00 pm.

ADJOURNMENT:

Jerry Gaspardo moved, seconded by Luke Bartlett, that the meeting be adjourned. This motion was unanimously approved.

This meeting was then adjourned at 8:10 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Charles T. Schopp, Secretary
Livingston County Regional
Planning Commission