

AGRICULTURE, ZONING AND EMERGENCY SERVICES COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE AUGUST 2, 2022 MEETING

The meeting was called to order at 5:03 p.m.

Present: Jason Bunting, Tim Shafer, Gerald Earing, Joel Barickman, Steven Lovell, Paul Ritter, and Scott Mennenga

Absent

Committee Chair Bunting commented about the agenda for this August 2, 2022 meeting. With no needed corrections or amendments noted, Paul Ritter moved, seconded by Steven Lovell that this agenda be approved as presented. This motion was unanimously approved by voice vote.

Committee Chair Bunting then referred to the minutes of the July 5, 2022 committee meeting. Gerald Earing then moved, seconded by Scott Mennenga that the July 5, 2022 minutes be approved as presented. This motion was unanimously approved by voice vote.

Business:

Wind/Solar Projects Discussion:

Chair Bunting noted to committee members that EDF Renewables has officially submitted their special use application for a wind farm in Livingston County and that hearings for that special use would be commencing next month.

Chair Bunting then noted the recent increase of solar farm interest in the county and mentioned a possible moratorium on solar farm applications until the county could properly plan for solar development.

Joel Barickman then discussed with committee members about how the county needs to be careful with solar development in regard to its potential contradiction to the county's comprehensive plan which prioritizes the preservation of prime farm soil. Barickman further explained that the recent influx of community solar applications is just the beginning of what is to come if more money is approved at the federal and state levels for renewable energy. Additionally, Barickman explained that if solar farms were to consume thousands of acres of the county, it could re-shape the primary use of the county's farm ground which would require an adjustment to the comprehensive plan as well as an explanation to the citizens of the county as to why the county is shifting away from agriculture as its primary industry. Barickman also noted that a large amount of solar farm development in the county could drive up the price per acre beyond what is affordable for local farmers.

Case SU-3-22 – Thresherman Solar

This zoning case pertained to the review of a proposed expansion of an already approved solar farm (Case SU-2-18) from 2 MW to 5 MW located in Section 26 of Esmen Township.

Kiera Gavin was present as a representative of the project and gave a presentation of the project to committee members.

Earing mentioned a remark that was made to him about solar panels actually contributing to global warming by the reflection of the sun off of the panels. Gavin's colleague who was present at the meeting explained that back in the 80's and 90's, they did not apply any type of anti-glare material to the solar panels which did, in fact, cause that effect for global warming. However, in modern solar panels, there is an anti-glare material that is applied to the panels that eliminates glare as well as the issues that contributed to global warming before.

Barickman questioned Gavin on how they were able to increase the MW output from 2 to 5 and only having to increase the footprint of the project by 10 acres rather than having to double the acreage. Gavin explained that new technology has been developed since the original project proposal which allows for solar panels to be more efficient which reduces the number of panels needed for similar output.

Barickman then noted that this project is in a good location due to a limited number of residences in the area as well as it being very close to an area that has become industrial in nature, but again noted that the county needs to develop a plan for solar development.

With there being no further questions or comments, Gerald Earing moved, seconded by Paul Ritter that Case SU-3-22 be recommended for approval.

The motion carried with a unanimous roll call vote.

Due to the next meeting start time approaching, Chair Bunting asked for a motion to recess this meeting until Thursday, August 11th at 5 PM. Paul Ritter then made a motion, seconded by Steven Lovell that this meeting be recessed to August 11th at 5 PM.

The meeting was recessed at 5:59 p.m..

Jesse J. King, Assistant Administrator
Livingston County Regional
Planning Commission

