

MINUTES OF THE LIVINGSTON COUNTY
REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING
HELD ON AUGUST 29, 2022, STARTING AT 7:00 PM
IN THE LIVINGSTON COUNTY HISTORIC COURTHOUSE
112 W. MADISON ST. PONTIAC, ILLINOIS

The meeting was called to order at 7:02 p.m.

Roll call was taken.

Those present were: Michael Haberkorn, Shane Long, Joel Barickman, Verne Taylor, Jerry Gaspardo, Dean Wahls, Dee Woodburn, Rudy Piskule, and Keith Bahler

Those absent were: Scott Sand and Ed Hoerner

APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA:

The agenda to this meeting was mentioned by Haberkorn with an amendment needed to remove an item of business pertaining to the review of Oxeye Solar. Joel Barickman moved, seconded by Dee Woodburn that the agenda for this meeting be approved as amended for this August 29th meeting. This motion was unanimously approved by a roll call vote.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Minutes from the August 22, 2022 meeting were noted. With no needed amendments or corrections noted, Dean Wahls moved, seconded by Verne Taylor, that the meeting minutes be approved as presented. The motion was unanimously approved by a roll call vote.

BUSINESS:

Rudy Piskule arrived at 7:12 P.M.

Case ZM-1-22 – Hoffmeyer

This zoning case pertained to the review of a proposed zoning map amendment to change the zoning of a 1.58 acre parcel of land located in South Streator from an I1, Light Industrial, District classification to an R2, Low Density Multiple Family, District classification.

The assistant zoning administrator then gave an overview of the case to planning commission members.

Melanie Hoffmeyer, the applicant, was not present at the meeting.

There was a comment from Barickman that he lives in the area of where the subject property is at and feels that this proposed zoning map change fits the nature of that area and would be an appropriate change in zoning classification.

Keith Bahler then moved, seconded by Shane Long that this zoning case be recommended for approval.

The motion then carried by a roll call vote:

Jerry Gaspardo –	Yes	Dean Wahls -	Yes
Michael Haberkorn –	Yes	Dee Woodburn -	Yes
Shane Long –	Yes	Scott Sand -	Absent – No Vote
Ed Hoerner -	Absent – No Vote	Joel Barickman -	Yes
Verne Taylor -	Yes		
Keith Bahler -	Yes		

Case SU-11-22 – Grani’s Acres

This zoning case pertained to the review of a proposed special use to allow for property located in an AG, Agriculture, District in unincorporated Fairbury to be used as a wedding venue.

The assistant zoning administrator provided an overview of the case to planning commission members.

Amy Randazzo, the applicant, was present at the meeting as a representative of the case.

There was a question about the capacity of the proposed building that would be built for the wedding venue. Amy stated that the capacity would be about 256 people.

Next, there was a question about the parking lot that would be built and whether or not it would be hard surface parking. Amy stated that it would be a hard surface paved parking lot.

There was then a question about whether or not the property was on city water. Amy stated that it was not and that they planned to use a rainwater collection system for their water needs.

A question then came up about a liquor license for the venue. Amy stated that they did not plan on acquiring a liquor license for the venue, but would do so if it was required. Amy added that they would rely on outside vendors to have valid liquor licenses for alcohol service.

A planning commission member then asked about what is done if the venue grows into further uses outside of a wedding venue. The assistant zoning administrator noted that special use cases are required to have reviews at certain times during the life of the special use and that would be a way for the county to stay up to date with what is going on at the venue.

There was then a question about flooding. Amy stated that the property does not flood.

A question about police jurisdiction then came up. It was clarified by the assistant zoning administrator that it would be the sheriff’s office’s jurisdiction.

Barb Ruff, a neighbor to the subject property, then voiced her concerns about the proposed special use by stating that she is concerned about the increase in traffic to the property. Barb also stated that

she was concerned about what effect the proposed special use may have on her property value. As for the flooding question that came up earlier, Barb stated that it does flood in that area.

Amy then returned to the microphone to answer questions.

There was a question about outdoor dining. Amy stated that there would be an outdoor seating area which would consist of a firepit and some outdoor seating which was illustrated in the floor plans that commission members had in front of them.

Amy then made a closing statement that her and her family have cleared out a lot of junk from the property and have greatly improved it from what it was.

There was then a comment by a planning commission member that it seems as though the two neighbors need to get together and discuss these plans with each other and try to come to some agreement. It was related by Barb that Amy never approached her prior to receiving a notice that she had plans to do anything like this with the property.

Rudy Piskule then made a motion to not recommend this zoning case for approval to the zoning board of appeals. With there being no second, that motion was defeated.

There was then a motion by Keith Bahler, seconded by Dee Woodburn, that this zoning case be recommended for approval to the zoning board of appeals.

The motion then carried by a roll call vote:

Jerry Gaspardo –	Yes	Dean Wahls -	Yes
Michael Haberkorn –	Yes	Dee Woodburn -	Yes
Shane Long –	Yes	Scott Sand -	Absent – No Vote
Ed Hoerner -	Absent – No Vote	Joel Barickman -	Yes
Verne Taylor -	Yes		
Keith Bahler -	Yes		

Case SU-7-22 – Old 66 Solar

This zoning case pertained to the review of a proposed special use to allow for a 2 MW solar farm in an AG, Agriculture, District in unincorporated Pontiac.

The assistant zoning administrator then provided an overview of the zoning case to planning commission members.

Kiersten Sheets, a representative of Trajectory Energy Partners, then provided a more in-depth presentation of the project along with community solar in general with the assistance of Mr. Uphoff.

There was a question by a planning commission member about the attendance for the open house that Trajectory Energy Partners hosted. Kiersten related that there were 10 people that showed up to the open house.

There was then a question about the nature of the property use to the North of the project. The zoning administrator answered that it is technically residential, but it is mostly used recreationally. There was then further discussion about nearby residences.

Barickman then voiced his concerns on solar development.

There was then a question whether or not the project could incorporate the neighboring property to the East in order to make the project bigger since it was a smaller project. It was discussed that the neighboring property is mostly flood plain and that it would not be suitable for development.

Piskule then voiced his concern over the amount of farmground taken out of production and energy produced for a solar farm compared to a wind turbine.

Discussion over landowner compensation for solar farms then took place.

There was then discussion about weed control and who would be in charge of maintaining the weeds and who could enforce that aspect of the solar farm. It was clarified that a third party company would maintain the weeds and that the county zoning office could be notified of issues regarding weeds who could then enforce the maintenance of the weeds.

With there being no further discussion, Rudy Piskule moved, seconded by Jerry Gaspardo that this case be recommended for approval.

The motion then carried by a roll call vote:

Jerry Gaspardo –	Yes	Dean Wahls -	Abstain
Michael Haberkorn –	Yes	Dee Woodburn -	Abstain
Shane Long –	No	Scott Sand -	Absent – No Vote
Ed Hoerner -	Absent – No Vote	Joel Barickman -	Yes
Verne Taylor -	No		
Keith Bahler -	Yes		

Case SU-8-22 – Broadlight Solar

This zoning case pertained to the review of a proposed special use to allow for a 5 MW solar farm in an AG, Agriculture, District in unincorporated Pontiac.

The assistant zoning administrator then provided an overview of the zoning case to planning commission members.

Kiersten Sheets, a representative of Trajectory Energy Partners, then provided a more in-depth presentation of the project along with community solar in general with the assistance of Mr. Uphoff.

At the conclusion of the presentation, there was a question by a planning commission member as to whether or not the project had the support of the Finkenbinders whose property abuts to the subject property. Ms. Sheets responded that the Finkenbinders have decided to list their home for sale due to this proposed project.

The floor was then open for public comment.

Angela Padula, a nearby property owner, spoke about her concerns for the project. Ms. Padula stated that she is concerned about all of the farmground that is being taken out of production not by just this project, but by all of the solar farms as a whole. Ms. Padula also stated that she is not the only one who is concerned about this project, but that all of the neighbors around this project have concerns.

Brad Trainor, a nearby property owner, then spoke. Mr. Trainor explained that he has great concern for weed control of the project and that he doesn't believe that putting sheep in the project to graze would work because sheep don't like to eat weeds. Mr. Trainor also spoke about his concerns for the drainage on the property due to the fact that there is an 8 foot elevation difference in the subject property and drains towards his property.

Matt Brummel on behalf of his father, a nearby land owner, then spoke. Mr. Brummel explained that his father farms nearby and that there is a drainage tile that runs through the subject property. Mr. Brummel explained that his father is concerned about the drainage tile being damaged.

Mr. Uphoff then responded to those concerns by explaining that drainage will improve by the planting of the pollinator vegetation. Mr. Uphoff also explained that drainage tile will be repaired as needed if there is any damage done during construction. As to the concerns for the weed control, Mr. Uphoff stated that the zoning office would be in a position to enforce the management of solar project due to how the language of the ordinance reads. Then, to address the concerns about farm acreage taken out of production, Mr. Uphoff displayed a graphic to show the comparison of how much acreage will be taken out of production for this project compared to what is still available in the county. Further, Mr. Uphoff showed an extreme example showing a graphic about the impact of taking 10,000 acres of farm ground out of production compared to what would still be available.

In conclusion, Mr. Uphoff described the benefits of this solar project to the county from its supplemented energy as well as potential energy savings by residents of the county. Mr. Uphoff also emphasized the importance of property owner rights and for property owners to be able to do what they want with their land as long as they are not harming others around them.

Barickman then responded by voicing his concerns over the potential for lost agriculture jobs due to the loss of farming acreage. Barickman also pointed out his concerns for the lack of consideration of neighboring property owners by solar developers.

Barickman then made a motion to not recommend this zoning case for approval due to a lack of support by neighboring property owners. Shane Long seconded this motion.

The motion then carried by a roll call vote:

Jerry Gaspardo –	Yes	Dean Wahls -	Abstain
Michael Haberkorn –	Yes	Dee Woodburn -	Abstain
Shane Long –	Yes	Scott Sand -	Absent – No Vote
Ed Hoerner -	Absent – No Vote	Joel Barickman -	Yes
Verne Taylor -	Yes		
Keith Bahler -	No		

OTHER BUSINESS:

The assistant zoning administrator then informed planning commission members that the 2,000 acre utility solar farm is expected to file an application sometime within the next couple weeks.

The assistant zoning administrator also reminded planning commission members about their wind farm hearing on September 12th and to try to keep their schedules open if possible.

PUBLIC COMMENT: None

ADJOURNMENT:

Joel Barickman moved, seconded by Dee Woodburn, that the meeting be adjourned. This motion was unanimously approved by a roll call vote.

This meeting was then adjourned at 9:04 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

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