

OVID TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION

OVID TOWNSHIP OFFICE, BRANCH COUNTY, MICHIGAN

November 17, 2020

SOLAR WORKSHOP MEETING MINUTES

The Ovid Township Planning Commission Solar Workshop was held via Zoom and was called to order by Andy AcMoody at 6:00 p.m.

Members attending online: Andy AcMoody, Chris Donbrock, Sean Groves, Jim Snivley, Tammi Schorfhaar

Other attending online: Robert Hawley, Matt Drennan, Joe Hass, Amy Havasy, Bill Benjamin, Chris Korey, Colin Kummerfeldt, Jaiver Latre, Nick Alexander and Sean Stocker

Matt Drennan (ESA Solar) explained that when utility scale projects are researching potential site locations, they look for areas that are near high voltage distribution lines; contain flat, non-wooded land (they avoid wetlands, flood plains and forested areas); and have willing landowners.

Chris Khorey (McKenna) provided a review of our Existing Land Use map, the Wetlands map and the Prime Farmland map. All of this information is useful in determining locations for possible solar energy projects. Javier Latre (ESA Solar) informed us that wetland areas must be confirmed by the DEQ (Eagle) before any development can take place. No project would receive financing if they try to locate near wetlands.

The suggestion was made that we may want to consider allowing these type of projects only in the Agricultural District. There was consensus that we want to protect both wetlands and woodlands.

There was discussion about the current Zoning Ordinance and several items which need to be addressed:

1. Potential removal of minimum lot size.
2. Remove setback requirements between participating contiguous parcels.
3. Make sure to require road setbacks and setbacks on the boundaries of the solar farm. Matt Drennan (ESA Solar) explained that a 100 foot setback is acceptable to the industry and would be done as a minimum. If the Planning Commission wanted, they could consider larger setbacks from residential areas.
4. Buffering and/or screening – potential items could include evergreen trees, native grasses, various types of ground cover, grazing plantings and pollinators. We should include exemptions to provide for clear corner vision at intersections. It was agreed that berms are not felt to be as desirable.

There was discussion about providing language in the update to the Master Plan which would provide limitation on how many Solar Farms could be located in Ovid Township. ESA Solar will assist us in exploring language that references the capacity of the distribution lines in regards to how many projects would be acceptable.

Matt Drennan (ESA Solar) requested that we review Section 20.05(B) which currently states that the sale of property which has a Special Use Permit would thereby cancel the Permit. This presents a large problem for this type of project and discussion was held whether this was desirable in any situation. Chris Khorey will review this language and make a recommendation.

The next Solar Workshop is scheduled, via Zoom, for Tuesday, December 1, 2020 at 6:00 p.m.

The Solar Workshop adjourned at 7:56 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by Tammi Schorfhaar, secretary.