

MOORLAND TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION

Approved Minutes for Regular Meeting

DATE: July 9, 2024

TIME: 7:00 p.m.

PRESENT: Tim Hedges, Peter Kantola, Jake Tyers

ABSENT: Todd Sluis, Larry Gardiner

STAFF & GUESTS: Ross Leisman, Township Attorney; Dan Nutt, Township Zoning Administrator/Supervisor; Brooke VanHouten, Admin. Assistant; Don Pant, Fire Chief; Dan Brentana, Fire Captain; Brian Terrien, Fire fighter; Eric Wedesky, IBV Energy Senior Project Manager; Robin Saiz, VP and Head of Development; Patrick Ripa, Executive Director of Planning and Engineering; David Caldon, IBV Energy local counsel; 29 residents, 1 candidate

SUBJECT: APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Motion: To accept the agenda combining the both public hearing into one hearing for both topics.

Moved by: KANTOLA Supported by: TYERS UNANIMOUS

SUBJECT: APPROVAL OF PREVIOUS MINUTES

Motion: To approve previous minutes.

Moved by: KANTOLA Supported by: TYERS UNANIMOUS

SUBJECT: PUBLIC HEARING

Eric Wedesky, IBV Energy Project Manager, gave a presentation and overview of the proposed solar farm project.

Hedges opened both Public Hearings at 7:26 p.m.

1. Ross Leisman explained the process. The land would have a conditional rezone while it is used as a solar farm. Once decommissioned, it will revert back to the original land zoning. There can be a bond held in place for the decommissioning process. There also needs to be a special land use approval. He then explained the ordinance and special land use documents.
2. Dan Nutt, explained that the Governor signed into law that the state would taking over the permitting for solar farms on December 1 and then we would not be able to provide input on setbacks, buffering etc. The State's standards are not as strict as the Township's. Also, by working directly with the company we will be eligible for more tax dollars from the solar farm company and grants.
3. Candy Busman, 1476 Slocum, what is the decommission plan, can they be continued to be used after 30 years?
4. Glen Fidge, 12547 Bailey, what is the plan for fires and emergencies? Drain? Who will own it and remove the equipment?
5. Rebecca Casler, 10 Ravenna, what is the effect on wildlife and stray voltage?
6. Wayne Klein, nonresident, why using farm land and not the Cobb plant?
7. Diane Berry, 12665 Bailey, what is the benefit to the residents?
8. Jesse Hills, 12737 Bailey, how does this affect property values?
9. Mark Arends, 11401 Laketon, why another solar farm here? Where is all the power going? Why farm land?
10. Robin Waidner, 12255 Bailey, feels defensive about the state taking over.

11. Maureen Spoelman, 1548 Ravenna, this is a rural ag township, why aren't we trying to save farmland?

12. Hedges, Kantola and Tyers explained that the state law will take over the permitting and what the township wants will not be considered with the state permitting process.

13. Lisa Crawford, 11696 White, can the state rezone? State won't have to, they will just allow it.

14. Roger Strandberg, 11579 White, what is the good neighbor policy?

15. IBV Energy Response

David Caldon, IBV Energy local counsel, the zoning runs with the land, it won't matter who owns the equipment/land. If there's a violation the township has right to revoke project right now. If company isn't around there can be a bond filed with the Township for decommissioning. The government has passed a renewable portfolio standard, by 2050, 100% of the grid has to be powered by renewables. Moorland Township is positioned well with the power grid, there is an interconnect point and large farmland owners. Ongoing agriculture can be farmland again after. Panels can theoretically be recharged but the energy industry will change within the next 30 years and can't predict what will be happening then. Panels will be removed in the decommissioning process not tress.

16. Patrick Rips, IBV Energy Executive Director of Planning and Engineering, will work with the Fire Department on emergency plans and proper equipment. Drain will be maintained properly. Wildlife impact, there will be a 7' fence. Panels will be at least 20' away from the fence. The national code is 16' for stray voltage. They will plant a cover crop and pollinator plants.

17. Rick Sietsema, 11715 – 78th Ave., Landowner, says it's not great soil. He will retain ownership of the land and will lease it for utilities. He wants to work with the township and not let the state.

18. Robin Saiz, VP and Head of Development, Housing and urban sprawl will never go back to farmland. After this project it can go back to farmland. It will be connected to a very large grid, utilities and other companies can buy power. When developing a project like this they look for transmission and private land owners. All of the studies conducted after these projects state the if there is less than 2,000 residences per square mile, there is no impact on property values. It is less than 1 mile to get power to a substation, there is no radiation. IBV has over 40 projects nationwide.

19. Arnie Heiss, 608 Goebel, there's a mandate for clean energy perhaps this is the future.

20. Martin Rosel, 12282 White, we can't change what's coming so we might as well get what we want and make the best of it. They are doing the best they can. It's inevitable.

The Public Hearing closed at 8:25 p.m.

SUBJECT: NEW BUSINESS

The planning commission discussed the project, land uses, conditions and the proposed rezoning ordinance, conditional rezoning agreement and the special land use resolution. Motion: To recommend to the full board for approval the conditional re-zoning of lands from A-1 to NR Natural Resources.

Moved by: KANTOLA

Supported by: TYERS

ROLL CALL VOTE

AYES: Kantola, Tyers, Hedges

MOTION PASSED

Motion: To adopt the resolution recommending to the full board approval of the Special Land Use Application from IBV Energy, Crockery Creek Solar.

Moved by: KANTOLA

Supported by: TYERS

ROLL CALL VOTE

AYES: Kantola, Tyers, Hendges

MOTION PASSED

The Planning Commission explained they are doing the best job for the residents. They are looking out for the next generation, better schools and fire departments.

SUBJECT: OLD BUSINESS

Updates:

1) Special Use– Sand Extrication – Bruins. We have not heard about the status from the Road Commission. GLES has a new engineer.

SUBJECT: DISCUSSION ITEMS

None.

SUBJECT: PUBLIC COMMENT

Maureen Spoelman asked how do we know there won't be another solar farm here. Witmer took those reassurances away from the local control.

SUBJECT: ADJOURNMENT

Motion: to adjourn at 8:35 p.m.

Moved by: KANTOLA

Supported by: TYERS

UNANIMOUS