

MANCHESTER TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION

Manchester Township Hall, 275 S. Macomb, Manchester, Michigan 48158

Regular Meeting Minutes – April 7, 2022

7:30 PM

A. CALL TO ORDER BY CHAIR

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Mike Walter at 7:30 PM. Members Present: Mike Walter, George Daubner, Dave Thompson, Doug Brooks, Ashley Buniack and Sybil Kolon, John Seefeld. Members Absent: None. Others Present: Ron Milkey, Toni Stefani, Katie Lambert, Barbara Fielder, Courtney Killeen, Cameron Alvado, Raquel Sayre, Stephanie Blatt.

B. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

A motion was made by Daubner, second by Brooks to approve the agenda as presented. Motion carried.

C. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A motion was made by Daubner, second by Thompson to approve the minutes of the March 3, 2022 regular meeting as presented. Motion carried.

D. PUBLIC COMMENT – None.

E. REPORTS AND CORRESPONDENCE

I. Report of Chairperson – Walter reported there are indications of an effort to oppose the Thorn Lake Solar farm project. In April we will elect officers, so this is the time for commission members to consider serving as chair, vice-chair or secretary.

II. Report of Township Board Representative – No report. A copy of the minutes of the March 8, 2022 board meeting were provided. Supervisor Milkey provided copies of the township's solar ordinance in advance of the Thorn Lake Solar farm public hearing on April 21.

III. Report of Zoning Board of Appeals - Walter reported the ZBA met to consider a setback variance request from Consumers Energy for the upgrade to their Manchester Gas Regulator station. The setbacks were granted to allow for replacement of the existing structure to update the facility, which requires the building footprint to be increased.

IV. Report of Planning Consultant – No report.

V. Reports of Committees

i. SWWCOG – Kolon reported the next meeting will likely be in May.

ii. Joint Planning Commission – Walter reported the JPC will meet next month and expects to have a draft update to the Joint Master Plan before the meeting.

VI. Correspondence – None.

F. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

I. Manchester Regulator Station – Copies of the site plan had been distributed, as well as a site plan review by planning consultant John Enos for Carlisle-Wortman. The review recommended approval if the zoning variance is approved, and addressing parking and the need for a right-of-way permit from MDOT. The variance was approved by the ZBA. Katie Lambert, for Consumers Energy, provided background on the project. The upgrade will allow for remote monitoring from Jackson. There will be a seven-foot chain link fence around the structure and a gravel base. Two visits per week are expected for inspections and maintenance. Several other representatives for Consumers Energy were present. There will be no need for a right-of-way permit and the parking issue has been addressed. No public hearing is required for this site plan. Construction is expected to start soon and should be completed by this summer. Motion by Thompson, second by Daubner, to approve the site plan. Motion carried.

II. Thorn Lake Solar – No comments. The public hearing will be April 21 at 7:00 PM.

G. NEW BUSINESS – None

H. COMMENTS FROM COMMISSIONERS

Buniak asked about any possible updates to the solar farm ordinance. Walter agreed it can be addressed starting in May.

Kolon, secretary of the commission, indicated concern with the absences of the recording secretary recently. She also indicated that it can be difficult to provide draft minutes of our meeting for the township board meeting which is normally the following Tuesday. She requested the township take steps to find a more reliable person to draft the minutes for her review.

Thompson expressed concerns with our planning consultant who has missed meetings. He had concerns about the handling of the Sow Good Farms project.

I. PUBLIC COMMENT

Barbara Fielder, who lives on Herman Road, adjacent to the proposed Thorn Lake Solar Farm, is opposed to the project. If the project is approved, she has two major concerns. 1) The plan for a chain link fence with barbed wire is not compatible with a rural landscape. She has seen an example of a more compatible fence, which she will provide pictures of. 2) There is no landscaping proposed on the east side of the project, which will result in her having full view of the solar panels from her back porch.

Tony Stefani stated that his father runs the Christmas tree farm on Sharon Hollow near US-12 and that he will be taking over the operation. He was aware of discussions the commission had in 2020 about an Agri-tourism ordinance, including event barns. He is involved with a larger group for Christmas tree growers and is getting involved with a group regarding agri-tourism. He is

interested in having more activities at the property and would like the commission to continue consideration of such an ordinance. He is willing to help and provide input. Walter agreed to send him the most recent draft of the proposed ordinance and that we could get back to this in a few months.

NEXT MEETING:

Public Hearing – April 21, 2022, 7:00 PM, Thorn Lake Solar Farm

Regular Meeting – May 5, 2022 NOTE TIME CHANGE: 7:30 PM.

J. ADJOURNMENT

A motion was made by Thompson with a second by Brooks to adjourn the meeting. Motion Carried. Adjourned at 8:19 PM.

Minutes Approved:  May 5, 2022
Secretary Date