

VILLAGE OF WESLEY CHAPEL
PLANNING BOARD MEETING MINUTES
WESLEY CHAPEL TOWN HALL
6490 Weddington Road, Wesley Chapel, NC 28104
October 22, 2018 – 7:00 PM

The Planning Board of Wesley Chapel, North Carolina met in the Town Hall at 6490 Weddington Road, Wesley Chapel in North Carolina.

Planning Board Members Present: Chair John Souza, Chuck Adams, Michael Kenary; Alternates (sitting as regular members) Deb Bledsoe and Vince Gahren

Planning Board Member Absent: Members David Boyce and Sandra Ells, Alternate Ty Jaiyeoba

Others Present: Clerk Cheryl Bennett; Planning/Zoning Administrator Shelley Williamson; Mayor Horvath, Council Members Mike Como and Amanda Fuller for parts of the meeting

1. Public Comment - none
2. Additions, Deletions and Approval of Agenda

Michael Kenary motioned to adopt the agenda, Deb Bledsoe seconded the motion.
The motion passed unanimously.

3. Approval of Minutes

A correction was made in the minutes for the minimum lot size which should read twenty acres. Michael Kenary motioned to approve the corrected September 24, 2018 minutes, Vince Gahren seconded the motion.

The motion passed unanimously.

4. Presentation on Solar Generating Facilities

Deb Bledsoe introduced Mike Davis who is with the N.C. Sustainable Energy Association which has developed a solar ordinance template. He arranged for Steve Kalland, Executive Director of the N.C. Clean Energy Technology Center at N.C. State University, part of the Extension Service, to speak tonight.

Mr. Kalland reviewed the history of solar energy, and noted the top solar market is California, and the second largest is North Carolina. Policy drivers include the NC state tax credit which is now expired, and the Federal Investment Tax Credit which is dropping. N.C. House Bill 589 (Senate Law 2017-192) shifts development from eastern N.C. to central N.C. and will result in a minimum of 6,800 MW of solar in the Duke Energy, Carolinas and Progress Energy territory by 2022. Benefits of renewable energy include economic benefits, jobs, increase in local property tax (as land comes out of the Present-Use Value program), and landowner revenue

diversification, as well as cleaner air and water. During the recent hurricane he heard of only a few solar panels being damaged.

Mr. Kalland discussed common concerns about solar energy. The panels do not pollute ground water, nor are they toxic to landfill as most panels are made of silicon. One maker uses cadmium telluride in its stable form and recycles their panels. The inverters use vegetable or mineral oil. Standards are being developed for batteries as they become more common. Electromagnetic fields are generated, but at the perimeter of the solar facility they are at the background level, so that is a non-issue. Most wiring goes to a three foot depth, and the National Electric Code requires either a six foot chain link fence with three strands of barbed wire, or an eight foot fence, both with adequate hazard warning signs. There are not many materials that would be fuel for a fire. The inverter does hum a little, like a residential air conditioning unit, but they tend to be located in the middle of the project; so at the perimeter the sound is ambient. Also the sound only occurs during the day. With newer single axis tracking systems, there is less noise. Glare occurs when you look in the direction of the sun; there were some reports of glare near airports, and Sandia/FAA provides Solar Glare Hazard Analysis Tool software for aviation that allows fixing the glare easily if within fifty miles of an airport. If the solar site is flat, plants can easily almost conceal the facility; with hills, there is more of a problem. As far as economic impacts, solar projects have helped farmers' down east. Personal property taxes have gone up (for the equipment and panels) and neighboring property values don't show an effect but there is limited data.

To date the vast majority of solar projects has gone on farmland. While there was a loss of North Carolina farmland of 100,000 acres between 2010 and 2011, land devoted to solar in the last decade is only 9,000 acres. Mr. Kalland reviewed agricultural impacts, such as grading and soil compaction, and the zinc from galvanized components which can leak into the soil and peanuts are most sensitive to zinc. After twenty-five years of a solar lease, the soil pH and nutrients will be out of kilter anyway. Ground mounted modules are not impervious surfaces, and he suggested not limiting the coverage, just use setbacks. Sheep grazing is a common vegetative management process. Using pollinator friendly vegetation can benefit neighboring farms. He noted Sun Raised Farms in Cornelius provides vegetation maintenance via sheep or mowing for solar farms.

Recycling of the solar panels is not difficult, the life span is 25-30 years. One site he knew of was de-commissioned a few years ago. Most sites will get re-commissioned with more solar panels. A de-commission plan is signed by the party responsible to de-commission, and should be submitted with the permit application. There may be multiple LLC's as the site changes hands, and the plan should be filed with the Register of Deeds and revised every five years. Commodity values usually outweigh the costs to de-commission. The sample ordinance has a simple de-commissioning plan. Interconnection to the electric grid is important.

Regarding minimum acreage to be cost effective, Mr. Kalland had not heard of a project smaller than fifteen acres, and those are co-ops. One megawatt would require six acres. There is an extensive process of state and local permitting. An energy storage study draft report will be out in November. There is no statutory requirement for one leg to notify the other legs in the permitting process. There are restrictions on who can enter the solar farm area.

Chair John Souza noted our proposed text has a specific class for solar farms, Mr. Kalland said he didn't think it necessary, but his opinion was it is okay if the restrictions are not excessive. Our proposed setbacks are one hundred feet on all sides. He noted the model ordinance has suggested setbacks, they may be slightly larger if adjacent to residential property. The model shows one hundred feet from the property line to the equipment, and setbacks to fencing are also shown. The model ordinance has different requirements by size of the facility KW's. Mike Davis noted our proposed text limits use to 60% of the lot which seemed restrictive, and he suggested using setbacks or impervious surface restrictions. Dust will occur as part of the construction, but on-going dust can be addressed in the ordinance.

Mr. Kalland and Mr. Davis were thanked for coming to our meeting and sharing all this information.

Chuck Adams asked to be excused. Chair John Souza motioned to excuse Chuck Adams from the meeting. Vince Gahren seconded the motion.

The motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Adams left the meeting.

5. Council Member in – Presentation, Discussion

No one signed up for this.

6. Text Amendment – Solar Generating Facility as an Essential Service Class V draft

Planner Shelley Williamson had proposed text for review. The provision to restrict usage to 60% of the lot was struck, as was the requirement on noise levels. Changes were made in setback requirements to require structural equipment be a minimum of one hundred feet from the edge of the pavement, and there be a minimum fifty foot setback for fences from the edge of the pavement. For screening, the minimum buffer is thirty feet. It was decided not to have a minimum acreage requirement. Battery storage will be added to the definitions. De-commissioning plans with a bond for the costs to remove less the value of the materials, plus 10% was discussed. A change was made to the definition of "Solar Power Generating Facility" to be those generating more than half a megawatt or 500 kilowatts. A change to the requirement for the plan to decommission was amended to add "within 12 months".

Michael Kenary seconded the motion.

The motion passed unanimously.

Vince Gahren motioned to postpone the rest of the items to next month. Michael Kenary seconded the motion.

The motion passed unanimously.

7. Text Amendment – Land Use Plan Amendment Process – draft

2018.10.22 PB meeting minutes

Postponed to next month.

8. Other Business – Continuing Discussion

Postponed to next month.

9. Other Business

Mayor Horvath noted this is Shelley's last meeting with us, our new planner starts October 29, 2018.

10. Adjourn

Vince Gahren motioned to adjourn, Michael Kenary seconded the motion.

The motion passed unanimously.

The meeting ended at approximately 11:07 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Cheryl Bennett, Clerk

Chairman John Souza