

MINUTES

PRAIRIE RONDE TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION

May 18, 2021

A working session of the Planning Commission was called to order by Chair Lynn C. McDaniel at 7 p.m. Members present: John M. Chapin, Dennis L. Hice, Bonita L. Landis, and Frederick J. Taylor. Also present: Michael Tomlinson and Leonard Griffin.

It was moved by Commissioner Taylor with support from Commissioner Chapin to approve the proposed Agenda. Motion carried.

It was moved by Commissioner Taylor with support from Commissioner Hice to approve the proposed minutes of the April 27, 2021, meeting of the Prairie Ronde Township Planning Commission. Motion carried.

Public Comments on Non-Agenda Items: None.

Unfinished Business: The Planning Commission continued discussion of solar energy systems and zoning ordinance criteria for zoning solar arrays. The Township does not have a solar panel ordinance. Proposed text drafting should delineate and define the key terms for the intended land uses. The focus should be whether the array is intended to be connected to the utility grid and the special size/area of the array apparatus. Electricity output may be irrelevant from a land use perspective.

Key Terms:

The first level covering solar generating apparatus and designed and operated solely for home/farm use, not connected to the grid. Treated as an accessory use and, thus, a "permitted use" as evaluated by the Zoning Administrator through the Zoning Compliance Permit process.

The second level would cover a generating land use intended to provide electricity for the subject premises and for the utility grid subject to various requirements and either the ZCP process or the Special Land Use Permit process.

The third level would cover a generating land use intended to provide electricity exclusively or primarily for the utility grid (and also for electricity needs of the facility). This level would be subject to the most stringent requirements, including siting requirements, and would be a special land use.

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The efficiency of solar panels has changed dramatically over just the past few years and will likely continue on that path, which is the main reason a focus on kw generated by the facility has nothing much to do with land use regulation per se.

Utility-scale solar generating facilities are a lawful land use, and it would be difficult to defend a position that there is no good place in the Township for this type of land use. The Planning Commission recommends that the Township lawfully make what amounts to a policy judgment that could express that prime farmland soils are more valuable for growing food, crops than "growing" electricity, and whether/how much the Township wants to use the Zoning Ordinance to control private property owner decisions on land use that would otherwise be made based on free market principle.

Any proposed zoning text should require security for implementation of a de-commissioning plan, including the requirement of a performance guarantee to insure compliance with the Zoning Ordinance and any conditions imposed under the Zoning Ordinance.

It was the consensus of Planning Commissioners that the Township Attorney craft some working-text-in-progress so that discussions may continue.

New Business: None.

Report from Zoning Appeals Board: None.

Members Time: Thank you again to Commissioner Landis for treating the commissioners and others present to ice cream and one of her delectable creations.

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It was moved by Commissioner Landis with support from
Commissioner Chapin to adjourn at 7:55 p.m. Motion carried.

Respectfully submitted:

PRAIRIE RONDE TOWNSHIP
PLANNING COMMISSION

Frederick J. Taylor
Secretary

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Public Hearing: Tuesday, June 8, 2021 at 6:30 p.m. at the
Prairie Ronde Township Hall. (Before the Township meeting)

Next regular meeting: Tuesday, September 2, 2021 at 7 p.m. at the
Prairie Ronde Township Hall.