

MINUTES
MOORE COUNTY PLANNING BOARD
THURSDAY FEBRUARY 5, 2015, 6:00 PM
MOORE COUNTY HISTORIC COURTHOUSE – 2nd FLOOR

Board Members Present: Buck Mims (Chair), Aaron McNeill (Vice Chairman), Molly Boggis, Eli Schilling, Scott McLeod, Rich Smith, Robert Hayter, Gene Horne, Eddie Nobles

Board Members Absent: NONE

Staff Present: Debra Ensminger, Planning Director
Theresa Thompson, Planner
Tim Emmert, Planning Supervisor
Brenda White, Deputy County Attorney
Lydia Cleveland, Administrative Officer II

Press Representatives: Greg Hankins

CALL TO ORDER

Planning Board Chairman Buck Mims called the meeting to order.

INVOCATION

Vice Chairman Aaron McNeill offered the invocation.

MISSION STATEMENT

Board Member Rich Smith read the Moore County Mission Statement.

PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

There was no public comment.

APPROVAL OF THE CONSENT AGENDA

- A. Approval of Meeting Agenda
- B. Approval of Minutes of February 5, 2015
- C. Consideration of Abstentions

Board Member Robert Hayter motioned to approve the Consent Agenda and the motion was seconded by Board Member Eli Schilling. The motion passed unanimously (8-0), Eddie Nobles was absent at the time of the vote.

PUBLIC HEARING(s)

Chairman Mims opened public hearing #1

The applicant, Flint Hill Solar, LLC is seeking a Conditional Use Permit to construct a commercial Solar Collector Facility on NC Hwy 24-27 in the Carthage Township on a parcel (ParID 00004653) owned by McDowell Timber Company as identified in the Moore County tax records. The parcel is approximately 36.55 acres.

Planner, Theresa Thompson presented background information as well as the purpose of the request submitted by the applicant. Ms. Thompson presented the recommended motion regarding this case and asked if there were any questions.

Board Member Molly Boggis asked if there are any wetlands on the property. Ms. Thompson explained that preliminary data says no but the applicant will be completing a delineation of the property. Board Member Boggis also asked if the property abutting the proposed location is residential. Ms. Thompson stated that the surrounding lots are zoned residential and there are four dwellings. Board Member Boggis asked for confirmation that the minimum set back of 50 feet has been met, and Ms. Thompson stated yes this has been met and this is confirmed on the site plan.

Board Member Smith stated that on the plan it shows a proposed tree line which he assumes to be where clearing has stopped. Board Member Smith asked if this proposed lot is totally wooded at this point. Ms. Thompson stated that there is a proposed tree line that is partially existing and additional screening will fulfill the type 3 screen requirement and will be inspected by staff prior to receiving a certificate of occupancy. Board Member Smith additionally asked if the proposed tree line will go around the entire property, and Ms. Thompson replied "yes".

Chairman Mims called on the applicant representative to provide his case.

Mr. Dave Neill the attorney representative of the applicant explained that the property is currently owned by McDowell Timber Company and many of the adjacent property owners are extended family. Mr. Neill stated this site currently has a dense vegetative covering due to a cut of the property 7-8 years ago, and the intent is to use this existing buffer except in the northwest corner. Mr. Neill explained that he has brought subject matter experts to explain how the four findings of fact have been met by the proposed conditional use permit if needed.

George Retschle stated that in his professional opinion if the proposed solar facility is installed the way it is designed it will not adversely affect public safety or health.

Tom Hester distributed an affidavit that includes an appraisal of the site and after a review of existing solar farms as well as transactions of properties that are similar; Mr. Hester stated there is no affect to property value. Board Member Scott McLeod asked Mr. Hester to monetize “basically similar” and Chairman Mims asked if there was any monetary drop. Mr. Hester stated no.

Board Member Smith asked if the equipment will rot over time. Mr. Neill explained that if a panel does not work then the business model fails. Chairman Mims asked Mr. Neill what the exit strategy is and he explained that a decommissioning plan is required for a certificate of occupancy and the salvage value after a panel’s useful life is greater than the cost to remove it.

Board Member McLeod asked about the height of the panels. George stated that depending on the typography the height would be no greater than 10-15 feet. Board Member McLeod expressed concern regarding the height of a typical pine tree and the coverage that is not provided as they grow.

Board Member Smith asked the applicant if they would throw in some extra landscaping just along the left side along the road. Additional Board Members expressed their concern for additional landscape buffering. Mr. Neill stated that he would like to go back and review the southwest corner and the two planting buffer areas.

Board Member Hayter asked if there is credit given for existing shrubbery and Ms. Thompson stated yes.

Deputy County Attorney Brenda White explained that requested additional planting can only be a recommendation because the requirements have been met.

Mr. Neill stated that he will go in good faith and see if there are spots that could potentially be visible.

Board Member McLeod asked how many solar farms Cypress Creek operates. Mr. Neill explained that are 40 in operation and approximately 100 in the approval process. Board Member McLeod asked if any of the 40 in operation have had to close for any reason and Mr. Neill stated “no”.

Chairman Mims asked if the citizens in the audience had any questions or would like to speak. Ms. Martha Steel of 227 Mt. Carmel road asked if there any hazardous chemical or waste produced by the operation. The applicant stated no and Chairman Mims additionally added that in the Planning Board preliminary research it was found to be very quiet.

Board Member Hayter made a motion to endorse the Moore County Board of Commissioners to approve the Conditional Use Permit for the use of a Solar Collector Facility on the parcel known as ParID# 00004653. The motion was seconded by Board Member Gene Horne and the motion passed unanimously (9-0).

Chairman Mims closed public hearing #1

OTHER BOARD MATTERS

Chairman Mims explained that an Open Space Committee will not be needed to assist the Board of Commissioners at this time.

PLANNING DEPARTMENT REPORTS

Planning Director Debra Ensminger stated that there is the possibility of 4 solar farms next month and Ms. Ensminger discussed the upcoming Department of Transportation meetings scheduled for this later in the month. Ms. Ensminger further explained that the UDO will be reviewed with the intention of making it more business friendly.

BOARD COMMENT PERIOD

Chairman Mims welcomed Board Member Eddie Nobles back.

ADJOURNMENT

With no further comments Chairman Mims adjourned the regular meeting of the Moore County Planning Board.

Respectfully submitted by,

Lydia Cleveland
Administrative Officer II