

Keene Township Planning Commission Special Meeting

Minutes from meeting - Wednesday August 21st, 2024.

Denny Briggs called the meeting to order with the Pledge of Allegiance at 7:02 PM.

Roll Call:

Present: Denny Briggs, Christine Hendrick, Nancy Solomon, Matt Stahlin, Corey Wojcik, Cori Wilber

Absent: Ray Krieger

There were approximately 25 members of the community present along with Zoning Administrator, Jeanne Vandersloot.

Changes to the Agenda:

None

Approval of Last Meeting Minutes:

The spelling of Nancy Solomon's last name needs correction.

There was some discussion on using our existing ordinance for small and medium solar and using Foster and Swift's example ordinance for commercial solar. We are only working on the commercial section of the ordinance.

Motion by Wilber to approve minutes with the changes specified and seconded by Stahlin. All approved. Motion carried.

Report from Township Rep:

Wojcik mentioned brining the roads, mowing the sides of roads and congratulated the new members of the Board.

Report from Zoning Administrator:

Vandersloot stated she issued three zoning permits and one land division (boundary adjustment change) .

Vandersloot also stated that the Planning Commission did not meet in July. They studied the survey results and held a public hearing for an onsite solar system electric generation for farm use on August 7th. Next meeting is October 1st. Note: a special meeting is scheduled for September 9th.

The regular fiscal year meeting dates are May 8, August 7, October 1, 2024 and February 4, 2025.

Other:

Vandersloot received several calls from appraisers and residents with miscellaneous zoning related questions. She gave an update regarding the removal of an old mobile home and mentioned receiving a written complaint about two properties with unlicensed vehicles. This will be investigated in August and letters will be sent.

Zoning Board of appeals:

None

Public Comment - Topics Not On The Agenda:

Someone mentioned a problem with worms.....

Old Business:

Remarks on the renewable energy survey:

Tom Sprague was given 15 minutes to discuss the Survey Results. He has agreed to receive inquiries and requests to forward his information to residents. There was a concern about the documents he would be sending and if they were protected. Wilber offered to make the documents protected so someone won't accidentally change or delete them.

Solar Amendment Draft:

It was agreed that we would be working with the Foster and Swift sample ordinance as it is non-compatible with a "kicker" that makes it compatible on November 29. We will work on the areas that are marked with Red X's: coverage, sound, height. Bob Schafer mentioned designated zones.

Need to discuss overlay.

Red X - Sound

40 DbA Lmax was mentioned because most other townships have agreed this would be a safe level for the human ear.

Red X - Setbacks

Wojcik wants 150' setback and does not want 500' with no acreage cap.

Hendrick wants 500' setbacks.

Wilber mentioned that most survey responders wanted 1000'. A compromise is 750' but she is good with 500' setbacks.

Nancy wants 500' setbacks.

Stahlin wants ~~250'~~200' setbacks.

Briggs wants 250' setbacks or consistent with the junk yard setbacks of 200'.

Vandersloot noted 500' will eliminate many parcels from having solar panels.

Acreage cap is not mentioned in the Foster and Swift sample ordinance.

Alma and Riga Townships have 500' setbacks with no acreage cap. Need to verify this information.

Holli Melton's diagram was discussed. Red areas noted showed parcels with 500' setbacks from lot lines but did not specify the number of acres. AG zoned parcels were numbered and AG/Res zoned parcels were lettered.

Questions regarding acreage cap:

1. What is the State's acreage cap?
2. 50 MW = ? acres?
3. 100 MW = 500-800 acres?
4. 200 MW = 1200 acres?

Other comments regarding acres cap:

1. Jason Hardy mentioned that Invenergy will work with 250' setbacks.
2. Hendrick mentioned 500' setbacks with a good neighbor clause.
3. Trespass zoning does not apply to solar.

It was suggested to add a sentence that the PC can vary the setbacks during site plan review, depending on dwelling circumstances, to solar panel location nearby.

More discussion is needed regarding setbacks.

Red X - Height

It was agreed that in Section D System and Location Requirements, number 5 should specify the height of the mounts, buildings, accessory structures and related equipment must not exceed 18 feet when oriented at maximum tilt. Lighting rods may exceed 18 feet in height but they must be limited to the height necessary to protect the Commercial Solar Energy System from lightning.

Public Comment - Any Topic:

Question was asked if farmers would be able to use the 500' setback for farming. Yes.

Others asked about distances from existing homes and that given a priority to future homes built on that same parcel.

ADU was mentioned.

Land split was mentioned.

Adjournment:

Wojcik made a motion to adjourn. Seconded by Stahlin. All approved. Motion carried. Meeting adjourned at 9:20 PM.