

Keene Township  
Planning Commission Minutes

Tuesday, March 7, 2023 7PM

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

Roll Call:

Present - Denny Briggs, Ray Krieger, Dan Briggs, Matt Stahlin, Corey Wojcik, Nancy Solomon.

Absent - Mike Gasper

Approximately 50 members of the community were present along with Zoning Administrator, Jeanne Vandersloot.

Corey moved to switch the two public comments around and put the approval of minutes first on the agenda. Dan seconded. Motion passed 6-0.

Last meeting minutes were approved by a motion by Dan and seconded by Matt. Motion passed 6-0.

Public Hearing:

Recreational Marihuana Application for a Grow Facility - Session Farms LLC.

No public comment for change from Medical Marihuana to Recreational Marihuana growing in the existing building. Motion by Dan to recommend approval to the Township Board of the application to convert from Medical Marihuana to Recreational Marihuana. Seconded by Matt. Motion passed 6-0.

Public Comments -

Several residents spoke on the solar ordinance topic. Corey Wilbur began the discussion with a PowerPoint presentation. She also requested a round table type of meeting with the PC. Pat Wasiak continued with the presentation. Kim Newell also continued to present the PowerPoint. She brought several copies of our Master Plan for the residents. Tom Sprague spoke about Exclusionary Zoning and had information from Judge Dennis Kolenda. Bob Schafer continued with information about Right Sizing the Solar energy production and that we could make enough energy for our township on a much smaller scale. Holli Melton presented information regarding the Heat Island effect and wanting separation between solar fields. Taylor Lewis continued to read the PowerPoint asking for specific language. Nancy Solomon read a letter to the group. Tara Decker and Andrea Hardy read letters. A Delegate from the Republican Party, Paul Geiger was also present stating that he will continue to attend our meetings.

There was discussion by the members to update the Master Plan as ours is dated 2016. At the last 5 year review it was decided to wait until the 2020 Census data was available before

updating it. Covid and the solar amendments have delayed the process.

#### Old business: Commercial Solar Ordinance Amendments

Discussion took place by the members regarding the percentage of land to be covered with solar panels, setbacks, AG and AR land, and limited acreage coverage to 500 acres. Robert Simpson suggested a lower number of acres. Specific topics and decisions are listed below.

Jeanne went over her memo regarding more clarifications and additions from re-reading many other township solar ordinances. The members discussed them and made decisions.

#### Approval given to add to Section L1g:

Power and communication lines running between racks of solar energy collectors may be placed above ground, providing the lines are placed no higher than the top of the solar panels such as attached to the frames under the panels and not interfere with plant life and grazing animals underneath.

#### Approval given to add to Section L1 I2:

Provide a copy of the applicant's power purchase agreement with the electric utility company showing approval of an interconnection with the proposed solar project.

#### Approval given to add to Section L1a:

Noise from any inverter, transformer and substation shall not exceed 40 dBA at the exterior lot lines of the project boundary and any neighboring dwellings in existence at the time of granted approval. A participating dwelling owner may agree to a higher dBA level with a signed statement. Parcels with lines to the center of a road, the limit is measured at the road right of way. To reduce sound levels around inverters, transformers or substations, fences, walls or other sound absorption reduction methods may be used or required.

#### Approval given to add to Section L4g:

If a plan is to repower (replace large amounts of older working or nonworking panels) instead of decommissioning due to new technology or other reasons, a narrative and site plan shall be submitted to the Township Board for review.

#### Approval given to add information regarding Stray Voltage to Section L1g:

After installation and periodically every two years, testing for stray voltage shall be completed using the latest technology. Testing results need to be reported to the Township and repairs done within 30 days.

Maximum project acreage in Section L1c - After much discussion of impact on the Township, visits to other projects and to be consistent with the Master Plan, it will be capped at 500 project acres. Also, to add the following sentence: Grazing of farm animals around the solar panels are permitted with suitable ground cover crops.

Approval given to add information regarding Lot Coverage in Section L1a:

Discussion took place regarding the current 20% maximum lot coverage for buildings and structures in the AR and AG districts. More land would need to be leased to meet these percentage amounts. Need to preserve most farmland but allow some solar energy systems. The Township Attorney recommended to exempt solar equipment from those lot coverages. The following sentence will be added: The commercial solar energy system components shall not count towards the maximum lot coverage for the project location parcels.

Motion made by Corey to move the Solar Amendments to Public a Hearing and seconded by Dan. Motion approved 6-0. Due to Spring Break being the week of April 4th, and several members planned to be out of town, a motion was made by Dan, seconded by Corey, to set the Public Hearing to April 10 which is the day before the next Board Meeting. Approved 6-0.

Motion to adjourn by Matt at 9:27 PM and seconded by Ray. Motion approved 6-0.