

Keene Township  
Planning Commission Minutes

Tuesday, February 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. Excused Absent – Nancy Solomon, Mike Gasper. Matt Stahlin will act as secretary in Nancy’s absence.

Approximately 50 members of the community were present along with Zoning Administrator Jeanne Vandersloot, township attorney James Doezema from Foster Swift Collins & Smith PC and representatives from Invenergy.

Corey moved to switch the two public comment sections around and put the approval of minutes first on the agenda. Dan seconded, motion passed 5-0.

Approval of last meetings minutes: Corey moved to approve as read, Dan seconded, motion carried 5-0.

Public comments for any topic: Several residents spoke on the solar ordinance topic. Kim Newell spoke about what she has seen at two large solar developments in other parts of the state. John Timpson talked about his experiences in Lowell Township with putting berms around a sandpit and the lengths he had to go to in order to block the view from surrounding properties. Becky Smith spoke generally about being opposed to large-scale solar projects near her house. Jill Thompson voiced general concerns about glare, setbacks, and property values. Bob Schafer questioned whether there should be zoning changes, tax and legal ramifications, and whether solar development is a good use for prime ag land. Tammy Prebble played a recording on her phone of what she said was noise from a project in Lennon, MI and asked about language that would cap the noise level. Taylor Lewis said she recently moved to the township because of the open land, and doesn’t want to see it covered with solar panels. She provided examples of an ordinance from Caledonia. Holli Melton spoke about her research on heat islands and other effect of solar panels on local weather.

New Business: None

Old Business: We went through the attorney’s marked up version of Section 12.27 that added some clarifying language.

Section L: strike “solar farm” and replace with “CSES”, the abbreviation for “commercial solar energy system”

Section 1d: add “Pollinator species are encouraged” as a new sentence after “...spot spraying is encouraged.

Section 1f: strike “but allow deer to pass over and through”

Section 1h: strike “generally”

Section 1k: add “County to approve driveways accessing the right of way” at the end of the paragraph.

Section M.n: Add “project” in front of “owner” and after “The developer or...”

Section M.o: Add sentence at the end “Through the life of the project, If the plan is updated, the township must approve.”

Section 4h: Change sentence that starts out “Every 2 years....” To “Every 2 years new cost estimates shall be provided and the performance amounts reevaluated by an engineer selected by the township and paid for by the project owner.”

Section 4i. should be changed to 5.

Section 5 should be changed to 6.

Section 6 should be changed to 7.

There was general discussion among the commissioners about the need for noise and stray voltage to be addressed in the ordinance. Corey brought up the idea of reducing the size of allowed projects to two with a maximum of 250 acres of panels each. There was also discussion of requiring berms or walls around the inverters and to consider adding a decibel maximum.

The Township Attorney will review ramifications of reducing the maximum acreage of panel coverage from the draft number to a lesser amount.

Public Comment – Topics Not on Agenda: There were a few comments, including how residents could get information to the planning commission.

Motion to adjourn by Corey, seconded by Ray, passed unanimously. Meeting adjourned at 9:12PM

There is a meeting Monday February 13 to review a marihuana ordinance application for recreational growing.