

Zoning Board of Appeals Minutes

April 26, 2023

The meeting was called to order at 5:40 p.m. by Dave VanDeVelde with members James Ufkin, Russell Olson, and Neal Nelson present. Dennis Sullivan was absent. Zoning and Building Manager Kyle Stromquist was present. Applicant representatives Jack Curry and Matt Clementi were present for MA/SU 23-05 MA/SU. Department spoke about 23-06 ZO TA & 23-07 ZO TA. Applicants and audience members were sworn in. Meeting notices were published, posted and mailed.

Dave VanDeVelde made a motion to approve the meeting agenda. Neal Nelson seconded. All were in favor. Motion carried.

Russell Olson made a motion to approve the March 29, 2023 minutes as printed. James Ufkin seconded. All were in favor. Motion carried.

Committee reviewed the following zoning application:

- A. 23-05 MA/SU-Mark Russell and Kewanee Renewables, LLC being represented by Christopher Clark—requesting Article 12 R-3 Residential to Article 8 AG-1 Agriculture which will revert R-3 Residential property to AG-1 agriculture and then requesting Article 8 AG-1 Agriculture Section 8.3 Special Use Permit for Solar Farm Energy System

Dave VanDeVelde introduced map amendment and special use permit and then gave applicant representative Jack Curry the opportunity to discuss the solar farm energy system project.

Jack Curry introduced himself as the Development Manager for Nexamp which is an affiliated company of Kewanee Renewables, LLC. He started out by giving an overview of the Nexamp Company and a brief plan process of the project for Kewanee location. The site location is 36 total acres with approximately 25 acres being used for solar and will be 5 MW. Jack then discussed the steps that were taken to prepare for the project and public hearing meeting. Jack stated he talked to City of Kewanee City Manager and Zoning and Building Manager as the site location is within 1 mile Kewanee. Jack stated neither official were opposed of the proposed project and hoped to get a letter of recommendation or approval. Jack stated the letter has not been received yet. Jack stated they worked with Ameren to get an interconnect agreement. Matt Clementi introduced himself as the engineer of the project and worked on many different studies and reports including wetland studies, animal studies, air traffic, historical and ecological reports. All studies and reports have been submitted. Jack Curry stated the project meets Henry County Comprehensive Plan Principle #5 due to the location is in close proximity to the city, it is non-prime farm land, it is adjacent to major highway, and has tax benefits for the county and one of the local schools. Over a 4-year time frame, there will be a tax benefit of approximately \$30,000.00 with Kewanee school district receiving an estimate of \$18,000.00. Matt Clementi discussed more benefits of the solar energy farm system including a reduction of black outs or service outage with Ameren, there is a good buffer with trees remaining, a camera system put up by the company will be monitoring the site 24/7 for any issues, the panel layout is setback away from the drainage way or wetland areas, there will not be any grading and minimum impact to the land, and will develop less run off and at a lower run off rate for any lower range properties. The panel setbacks are more than what the ordinance requires. The setbacks are proposed as 50' from the back property line, 300' from Main St., and 400' to the nearest

residence. The setback from Main St. to the transformer is approximately 500-600' and 1000' from the nearest residence. Jack Curry mentioned very little to no noise with the solar energy farm system with a slight humming noise can be heard from the transformer especially when it is generating a lot of energy but stated neighbors should not be able to hear any noise and is heard only when in close proximity to the transformer.

Lynn Sutton asked what would be planted between the panels.

Jack Curry stated a slower growth native vegetation like native prairie grass.

Josh Curry asked how many sound decibels the humming made and also what the cost was for homeowners to subscribe to the solar energy.

Jack Curry stated he did not know the exact decibel number but the sound was comparable to household appliances. Jack stated there were no fees to sign up and could reconnect to Ameren at any time.

Lynn Sutton asked what the revenue stream for Nexamp is.

Jack Curry stated they would sell power to Ameren and Ameren would pay them for the power generated.

Steve Weber asked how many panels were going to be put up.

Jack Curry stated he didn't know the number of panels but the project would generate 5 MW of power that utilize 25 acres for solar panels

Doug Peterson stated he has Mid-American for his power supplier so does that mean he would not be able to sign up for the solar energy?

Jack Curry stated yes that is correct.

Lynn Sutton asked this area was zoned residential and not agriculture.

Department explained when the zoning map was adopted in 1959 and this area of land was part of a blanketed area that was zoned Residential but is adjacent to other business zoning and is considered a mixed use area.

Lynn Sutton asked if there were any more questions from committee members or from the audience.

Dave VanDeVelde asked if there were any questions from the Zoning Board of Appeals members after listening to Planning Committee questions and applicants answers.

Russell Olson asked applicant how many houses would 5 MW supply and do that many people apply for it.

Jack Curry stated that 5MW would supply approximately 400-500 houses and that there is typically a waiting list for people who want to apply.

Neal Nelson made the comment that this is in County jurisdiction but the City of Kewanee owns all around the area but this particular piece of land is not annexed into the City.

There were no other questions from Zoning Board of Appeals members after listening to Planning Committee questions and applicant answers.

Neal Nelson made a motion to approve 23-05 MA/ SU. Russell Olson seconded. A roll call vote was taken with 1 “yes” vote and 3 “no” votes.

Dave VanDeVelde introduced the proposed text amendment for the new wind and solar ordinances.

B. 23-06 ZO TA-Henry County—to review proposed text amendment to Henry County Zoning Ordinance—revised Appendix C Solar Energy Systems Ordinance providing rules and regulations regarding the installation of commercial and private solar energy systems in unincorporated areas of Henry County

C. 23-07 ZO TA- Henry County—to review proposed text amendment to Henry County Zoning Ordinance—revised Appendix B Wind Energy Systems Ordinance providing rules and regulations regarding the installation of commercial and private wind energy systems in unincorporated areas of Henry County

Department discussed the new state requirements that are going into effect concerning wind and solar energy farm systems. Department explained that the new requirements meant we needed to update and make some changes to our Ordinances in order to be compliant. Department stated setback requirements were changed for both wind and solar and explained the new setbacks for both wind and solar. Department also stated that the county cannot set any unreasonable fees for wind or solar. Department stated the county cannot be more restrictive than what is in the proposed ILCS. For the wind turbine blades, the height is set by FAA and the county cannot restrict the height. Department noted that we would still have a public hearing, decommissioning agreements, and road use agreements; same as before.

Dave VanDeVelde asked if there were any questions from the Zoning Board of Appeals members after listening to Department discuss the both wind and solar ordinance changes.

James Ufkin mentioned this is an ag community and is concerned about taking away ag land and prime farm ground. James stated so far the County has voted “yes” and approved 70 acres of land for the use of solar panels.

Department stated the State needs to this and has the right to do it by stating Illinois State Governor is wanting State of Illinois to be 25% renewable energy by year 2025 for public utilities power generation.

Russell Olson commented that he feels like the county is turning into “Yes Men” and that our hands are tied with decision making.

Neal Nelson made motion to approve 23-06 ZO TA.

James Ufkin seconded. Roll call vote was taken with all “yes” votes and motion carried.

Neal Nelson made motion to approve 23-07 ZO TA.

Russell Olson seconded. Roll call vote was taken with all “yes” votes and motion carried.

The next tentative meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, May 24, 2023 at 5:30 p.m. in Room 102J of the Henry County Courthouse

With no further business, Russell Olson made the motion to adjourn. Neal Nelson seconded. The meeting adjourned at 7:02 p.m.

Respectfully,

Kyle Stromquist
Zoning/Building Manager