

Zoning Board of Appeals Minutes

July 26, 2023

The meeting was called to order at 5:35 p.m. by Dave VanDeVelde with members Dennis Sullivan, Russell Olson, and Neal Nelson present. James Ufkin was absent. Zoning and Building Manager Kyle Stromquist was present. Applicant representative Cameryn “Camy” Clevenger was present for 23-11 SU. Applicant representatives Kyle McAdam, Carl Broberg, and Ian Ward were present for 23-10 SU. Applicants and audience members were sworn in. Meeting notices were published, posted and mailed.

Dennis Sullivan made a motion to approve the meeting agenda. Russell Olson seconded. All were in favor and motion carried. Roll call was taken with quorum made.

Dennis Sullivan made a motion to approve the June 28, 2023 minutes as printed. Russell Olson seconded. All were in favor. Motion carried.

Committee reviewed the following zoning application:

- A. 23-11 SU- Cameryn Clevenger, Theresa Sheffey and Joseph Clevenger being represented by Cameryn Clevenger-requesting Article 8 AG-1 Agriculture Section 8.3 Special Use Permit for rural small business/coffee trailer.

Chairman Dave VanDeVelde introduced special use permit and then gave applicant representative Cameryn Clevenger the opportunity to discuss the plans for the property.

Cameryn introduced herself as “Camy” and stated that she would like to have a coffee trailer business on her home property that her parents just recently bought off Highway 150 and 150 St. in Orion. Camy stated the trailer was converted into a coffee shop and would not be mobile and it will be stationary. Camy stated she has been in contact with Lucas Pobanz who is the Western Township Highway Commissioner and he has approved the proposed new entrance and approved the exit from the existing driveway. Camy stated she has been in contact with the Henry County Health Department to work with them for any permits and inspections needed from them to operate. Camy will be using the home well as her water source which her parents have just put a new filtration system and softener in for the well. The gray water will be contained in a tank and then disposed of properly. Camy stated she has been in touch with an electrician to have an electric line trenched to the trailer. The electric meter and box will be by the barn next to the trailer.

Gerald Franks asked if this was a drive thru only as he did not see any parking spots on the overhead view that was provided.

Camy stated yes, this would be a drive thru only line and they will be moving the fence back.

Ann DeSmith asked if there would be any food.

Camy stated coffee and espresso drinks only, no food.

Scott Stephenson asked the Department about any traffic stipulations to eliminate any traffic back-ups on the highway.

The Department stated that there will be stipulations put in place for no parking along the road. There will also be 3 spots available before and after the trailer for cars to sit while waiting to order if need be. The Department stated he would be doing another site visit to ensure everything is in order prior to business opening.

Josh Curry asked if the entrance and exit could be switched or why there were placed where they are being proposed.

The Department stated more room is usually needed for waiting to order. It would also allow a longer distance from the intersection for a customer to pull out of the exit and onto the township road.

Camy stated there will be entrance and exit signs.

Ann DeSmith asked what the distance from Hwy 150 to E. 150 St.

The Department noted the distance is approximately 500 ft.

Ann DeSmith asked if there were any more questions from the committee members.

Scott Stephenson asked the Department if there were any comments or concerns from any neighbors.

The Department stated there were no calls with concerns from any neighbors and that Lucas Pobanz approved the entrance and exit.

Camy stated the closest neighbor is the business Orion Tire and Repair and she has spoken to the owners and they have no concerns.

The Department mentioned that it was good that the area already has business use in it.

Ann DeSmith asked if there were any further questions.

Gerald Franks asked about the hours.

Camy stated she was focusing on the morning commute drivers so she will be open in the mornings.

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

Neal Nelson asked where the septic system was.

Dennis Sullivan asked if soil and water samples were taken. He also asked where the waste water would be stored.

Camy stated her parents had just recently purchased the property and everything with well and septic are good and up to code. She stated the waste storage tank is 50 gallons.

The Department mentioned that there would be stipulations for no parking on the township road.

With no other questions, Neal Nelson made a motion to approve 23-11 SU with the stipulations on parking and have the 3 car waiting area. Dennis Sullivan seconded. A roll call vote was taken with all “yes” votes and motion carried.

B. 23-10 SU-Glenn Nelson LP % Gregory Nelson and IL Solar 9000 LC c/o Lightstar Renewables LLC being represented by Kyle McAdam & Thomas Brown, IL Solar 9000 LC c/o Lightstar Renewables—requesting Article 8 AG-1 Agriculture Section 8.3 Special Use Permit for solar farm energy system.

Chairman Dave VanDeVelde introduced special use permit and then gave applicant representative the opportunity to discuss the plans for the property.

Kyle McAdam introduced himself as a developer with Lightstar Renewables. He then introduced Carl Broberg who is an engineer with Stantec and Ian Ward who is an agricultural architect. Kyle stated the project is planned to be on approximately 33 acres of land on 2 parcels. He stated that his company is the owner and operator of the project not just the developer and would be involved throughout the lifetime of this project. Kyle then gave an overview of how community solar works. He stated you would get a subscription from the solar array company and purchase energy at a discounted rate. The energy goes to a distribution grid and not a transmission line so the energy produced with this array would stay in that area. Kyle stated there are tax revenues for the school and county. The total acreage is 160 acres and the majority would remain agriculture land. The lifespan of the array is approximately 30 years which would give land owner or tenant farmer a steady stream of income for 30 years. The company would have a decommissioning agreement/plan to return the land back to the same as it was. Kyle discussed other benefits such as environmental benefits with a clear source of renewable energy. This project is 5 MW on 33 acres of current ag land and is close to the electric grid of Ameren IP and the interconnect costs are going to be in a reasonable range for development. The wetland survey and the EcoCat have been done. The Highway Department was worked with for the access road entrance. The setbacks are further than the requirements. This project is located within 1.5 mile of Village of Cambridge and Village of Cambridge is in support of this project. The panels are on single axis trackers and will move with the direction of the sun. Kyle stated there will be minimal traffic impact after the arrays are installed and traffic would consist of farm equipment and then a few company vehicles every 2-4 months for maintenance.

Lynn Sutton asked about the subscription service works.

Kyle stated there are State and Federal incentives and money from Ameren IP. This would be a 5 MW project with a few large subscriptions for Ameren IP customers and then other smaller business groups or other resident customers can buy a smaller portions of the subscription. Inside the fence of array, the farm ground can still be operational for hay production.

Josh Curry asked about insurance for any damages from either farm equipment or solar array panels.

Ian Ward spoke and described more about the how the process of having a solar farm array and productive farm ground all on one parcel. As for Josh Curry’s question about insurance, Ian stated there is still more education and information needed but he believes there would be have to be separate insurance policies; one for farm equipment and one for the solar panels.

Steve Weber asked about weed control methods.

Kyle McAdam stated there would be some type of vegetation management plan.

Ann DeSmith asked if any audience members had any questions or comments.

Dana Dwyer stated that they rent this farmland and it was her grandpa's since 1979 and he wanted it to stay in the family so the land was put into a trust. She stated her grandpa believed in alternate energy and would approve with solar panels and farming in one parcel.

Ann DeSmith asked if there would be separate contracts; one with the tenant farmer and one with the land owner.

Kyle McAdam stated yes there would be separate agreements written up.

Ann DeSmith asked if there were any further questions.

Gerald Franks asked about grazing animals.

Ian Ward stated sheep would be fine but not goats as goats tend to chew on things.

Ann DeSmith asked if there would be a decommissioning plan.

Kyle McAdam stated yes there would be a decommissioning plan.

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

Neal Nelson asked what the distance between rows would be.

Russell Olson asked about the NRCS office and the plan to work have solar and farm together.

Ian Ward stated there is language in the 2024 Farm Bill to encourage agrivoltaics.

Russell Olson asked when the construction would start on this project.

Kyle McAdam stated they are needing to finalize utility contracts and get permits so construction would probably be 2024-2025.

Dennis Sullivan asked if this project has already been approved in the state lottery.

Kyle McAdam stated it is in the state lottery.

Dave VanDeVelde asked if any other areas other than agricultural areas are looked at when choosing property for solar projects.

Kyle McAdam stated they yes, they have looked at over 5,000 sites and that the biggest component is the proximity to the grid.

Neal Nelson stated they he is glad to see and hear that this company is working with the tenant farmers.

Russell Olson asked how long Lightstar has been in business.

Kyle McAdam stated Lightstar has been in business 3 years. 2015 or 2016 is when community solar starting expanding.

Dave VanDeVelde asked if there any further questions.

With no other questions, Dennis Sullivan made a motion to approve 23-10 SU. Neal Nelson seconded. Roll call vote was taken with 3 “yes” votes by Dave VanDeVelde, Dennis Sullivan, and Neal Nelson. There was 1 “no” vote by Russell Olson.

The next tentative meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, August 23, 2023 at 5:30 p.m. in Room 102J of the Henry County Courthouse.

With no further business, Neal Nelson made the motion to adjourn. Dennis Sullivan seconded. The meeting adjourned at 6:37 p.m.

Respectfully,

Kyle Stromquist
Zoning/Building Manager