

FRANKLIN COUNTY PLANNING BOARD

March 10, 2015

The Franklin County Planning Board held its regular monthly meeting on Tuesday, March 10, 2015 in the Franklin County Administration Building, Commissioners Meeting Room, 113 Market Street, Louisburg, North Carolina.

Present: William Wallace, Mark McArn, Fannie Brown, John Sledge, Mary Solomon, Ronnie Pearce, Phillip Jeffreys, Richard Hoyle, Stuart May, and Robert Mann.
Staff: Scott Hammerbacher and Kevin Lewis

Chairman William Wallace called the meeting to order at 7:00 P.M., and welcomed everyone in attendance. Robert Mann gave the invocation. The agenda was adopted after a motion by Mr. Sledge was seconded by Mr. Jeffreys. A motion to approve the minutes from the prior Planning Board meeting, February 10, 2015, was made by Mr. Sledge, seconded by Ms. Solomon. The motion passed unanimously.

Agenda Items:

1. South Louisburg Solar LLC is requesting a special use permit to construct a solar farm on a +/- 40 acre portion of the parcel located at 1406 NC 39 Highway South. The application is for a permit to cover 69.3 acres (the "Project Area") within which the +/- 40 acre project will ultimately go. The proposed solar farm will be enclosed by a 6' security fence, and a Knox box will be provided on the gate to allow access by emergency services. The proposed solar farm is located so as to minimize its visibility from the adjacent private dwellings. It is designed to be low-profile, and is situated over 400 feet off the road. The proposed solar farm will make a minimum amount of noise at the inverters, which are typically located toward the center of the site. The noise is essentially not audible outside the security fence. There are no emissions, and once construction is complete, there are no daily employees. Expected traffic post construction is +/- 3 vehicles per month. The proposed solar farm will require no water, sewer, or school services. Typical stand-by fire and police service will be required, but hopefully not needed. The property is located in the Airport Overlay District in the R-30 Residential zoning district.

The proposed solar energy farm is a 5MW (AC) facility to be located approximately 2 miles south of Louisburg on NC 39 Hwy. The proposed solar energy farm will cover approximately 40 acres of land. The solar energy farm will comply with all local building codes, North Carolina utility requirements, NC Department of Environmental and Natural Resources restrictions, and Federal Energy Regulatory Commission requirements to ensure a safe and viable development for Franklin County. The facility will be positioned in excess of 100 feet from the nearest residential dwellings. The facility will not exceed the 25-foot maximum height limitation pursuant to Note 16 of the UDO. The proposed solar farm will not create a visual safety hazard for passing motorists. A visual buffer will be installed along the adjacent roadway, the facility will be low profile, and there will not be any permanent lighting. Parking for a minimum of 3 maintenance vehicles will be available on site. The proposed Solar Energy Farm will comply with the removal requirements as set forth by Note 16 of the UDO. South Louisburg Solar LLC has provided a copy of the decommissioning plan. Community Energy (owner of South Louisburg Solar LLC) is an experienced solar developer. In North Carolina, eighteen solar farms they developed are now

constructed and in operation. These include two projects developed previously in Franklin County: one off Firetower Road behind Edward Best Elementary and one at the corner of White Level Road & Walter Collins Road.

The submitted site plan indicates the landscaping and buffer strips, fenced in area, area for parking, and riparian buffers on adjacent ponds.

The following conditions for approval from Planning Staff have been added to the permit:

- Prior to securing building permits from the County, documentation from all other applicable state and federal agencies shall be submitted to the Franklin County Planning & Inspections Department verifying permit approval.
- Approval shall be subject to adhering to all other County, State and Federal regulations.
- Approval of stormwater management plan if there is a land disturbance of .50 acres or greater.
- An engineering estimate for the removal of the facility will need to be submitted in addition to a financial surety prior to the issuance of building permits.
- Approval of a NC Department of Transportation driveway permit.
- No lighting shall be installed without approval from the Franklin County Planning & Inspections staff.
- Screening shall conform to Article 14. Landscape Requirements and Article 8., Section 8-1, Note 6. Buffer Strips.
- Approval from local fire department for knox box.
- Approval of final layout and design of all solar panels and associated structures shall be submitted for review to the Franklin County Planning Department prior to the issuance of building permits.

Planning Board member Mr. May is listed as an owner of this property. He was in attendance but did not participate in the discussion or vote on this project.

Mr. McArn began by asking how far the evergreen buffer runs along the western portion of the property. The buffer will extend the entire length of the western edge of the site, and help protect the homes that border the section of the property.

Mr. Wallace stated he visited the property and believes the existing trees that separate the homes and this site will provide a good buffer year round, and the proposed evergreen buffer will be a benefit.

Chris Killenburg, of Community Energy, stated that this will be the third project submitted to Franklin County, as well as the largest he has worked on. In a response to a question from Mr. Pearce, this will be more than two and a half times larger than the other projects approved by county officials, and will be able to produce five megawatts of power.

Mr. McArn wanted to know how the company determines the size of a project they will be working on. Mr. Killenburg explained that all projects producing two megawatts or less are approved through a fast-track method. Projects two to five megawatts have a more stringent approval procedure, which requires agreeing with the local utility company on a rate.

Mr. Hoyle asked if utility companies are trying to pay less for solar power than in recent years. Mr. Killenburg clarified that point, saying it is easier for utilities to do what they have always done. He added that natural gas is cheaper than it has ever been, but that companies like Duke Energy are working with solar energy producers a great deal. Additionally, the agreement with Duke Energy for this project will pay South Louisburg Solar LLC 6.5¢ a kilowatt hour, and that price is set for the entire length of the 15 year contract.

After having all questions answered, Mr. Pearce made the motion to recommend approval, with staff conditions, to the Board of County Commissioners. The motion was seconded by Mr. Jeffreys and approved unanimously by the Board.

2. In other business, Mr. Hammerbacher confirmed that permit activity is steady and even increasing. He updated the Board of past permits and amendments approved, stating that they were also approved by the Board of Commissioners.

With there being no further business before the Planning Board, Mr. Wallace adjourned the meeting at 7:30 P.M.

William Wallace – Chairman
Franklin County Planning Board

Kevin Lewis – Clerk
Franklin County Planning Board