

FRANKLIN COUNTY PLANNING BOARD

May 13, 2014

The Franklin County Planning Board held its regular monthly meeting on Tuesday, May 13, 2014 in the Franklin County Administration Building, Commissioners Meeting Room, 113 Market Street, Louisburg, North Carolina.

Present: William Wallace, Fannie Brown, William Holden, Robert Mann, Steve Buescher, Carolyn Paylor, Steve Mitchell, John O. Sledge, Mary Solomon, and Mark McArn
Absent: Phillip Jeffreys, Ricky May, Ronnie Pearce, and Richard Hoyle
Staff: Scott Hammerbacher and Kevin Lewis

Chairman William Wallace called the meeting to order at 7:00 P.M., and welcomed everyone in attendance. Steve Mitchell gave the invocation. Scott Hammerbacher stated that the second item on the agenda, a UDO Text Amendment is being removed until it can be edited. A motion to approve the minutes from the prior Planning Board meeting, January 14, 2014, was held until they were edited. Steve Buescher made a motion to adopt the agenda, seconded by Mark McArn. The motion passed unanimously.

Agenda Items:

1. Request for a Special Use Permit by Sarah Solar, LLC to construct a solar farm on a 21 +/- acre portion of a 38.24 acre parcel located on Brewer Road (State Road 1458) in Cedar Rock Township, zoned AR (Agricultural Residential).

Mr. Hammerbacher stated that the solar facility will be located approximately 670+ feet off of Brewer Road, and the project will maintain the public health, safety and general welfare, and will not adversely affect public safety. The solar facility is an unmanned, infrequently visited project site. As such, the project will not increase the existing demand on public safety agencies (police and fire departments). The project site will be enclosed with a fence, preventing access to the general public. The applicant further states the Sarah Solar project will comply with all required regulations of the UDO and any specific standards and regulations required for this project. Because the Sarah Solar project will have landscaping and natural buffers shielding the project from view, the project will not impact the value of contiguous property. The applicant stated in 2013, David Massey was commissioned to perform an analysis on solar farm impacts on adjacent property values within Guilford County, NC. Mr. Massey is a State Certified General Real Estate Appraiser by the State of NC and a Licensed Real Estate Broker. Mr. Massey's practice consists of residential and commercial appraisals in Guilford, Alamance, Orange, Durham, Randolph, Chatham, and Caswell Counties of NC. Mr. Massey's study was performed to address the impact on adjacent property values related to two similar sized solar projects that Sunlight Partners was permitting in Guilford County. In the study, Mr. Massey concludes that "My professional and expert opinion is that the two proposed Solar Farms that will not be visible

will have no impact on the market values of the surrounding properties. The Solar Farms with the proposed landscaping buffers and natural buffers will not create a negative externality for the surrounding properties as they will not be visible". The proposed location for this project is designated as AR, and according to Section III of the Comprehensive Plan, Agricultural/Residential land use areas are not suitable for development at high densities. The Sarah Solar project will be in harmony with the area and will be in compliance with the plan for the physical development of the County due to the fact that project will not increase the population density within the Agricultural/Residential area, will not require urban services, will not decrease the level of service on existing roads, and views of the project will be shielded by natural and landscape buffers. Also, the Sarah Solar project will be in harmony with the adjoining properties and the general area. The project will utilize both existing and proposed vegetative screening to obscure the view of the project and minimize adverse impacts to adjacent landowners and the general public. In addition, the property boundary is not adjacent to any public roads. Periodic preventive maintenance and grounds keeping will take place, but the project will not be visited daily. The submitted site plan indicates the landscaping plan and area for parking.

In addition to requirements listed in the Franklin County UDO, the following conditions will be required if the special use permit is approved:

- Prior to securing building permits from the County, documentation from all other applicable state and federal agencies shall be submitted to Franklin County Planning & Inspections Department verifying permit approval.
- Approval shall be subject to adhering to all other County, State, and Federal regulations.
- Approval of storm water management plan is 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 issuance of building permits.
- Approval of 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.
- 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 issuance of building permits.

There were no questions from the Planning Board to Mr. Hammerbacher.

Mr. Wallace asked if anyone in the audience intended to oppose this project, two residents raised their hands. He stated that this meeting was not a public hearing, and while they are welcome to state their opinion, the County Commissioners meeting will be making the final decision to approve this project or not. Mr. Wallace then asked the applicant, Keith Colson, if he wanted to make a statement.

Mr. Colson stated that Sarah Solar is owned by Sunlight Partners, a company that specializes in renewable energy. He reiterated that there will be no negative impacts on the environment or surrounding properties, and the project is in harmony with the zoning of the area and county goals.

Mr. Wallace asked about the location of the invertors, concerning any potential noise issues. The two invertors, which produce 1.67 megawatts each, will have cooling fans that produce very little noise.

Mr. Wallace asked if the property owner, Tony Collins was present. He was not, but his father was in attendance as his representative.

Mr. Wallace commended the applicant's inclusion of the document entitled *Clean Energy Results* as a third party resource.

A neighboring property owner, David Brewer, was concerned about the quality of power he currently receives and if this project would affect that. The applicant and Duke Energy would ensure that the power lines will be upgraded where necessary in order to maintain the current quality.

Linda Patton, who lives west of the property, opposed the project. She stated that the solar panels will negatively affect her property value, will present a hazard during storms, and is not aesthetically pleasing.

The applicant stated that studies have shown no reduction in property values, that the panels are safe during storms, and that the plan can be amended to include additional landscaping which would improve the buffer.

Mr. Wallace asked the Board if there was any other discussion on the special use request. Mr. Wallace and Board proceeded with the Special Use checklist.

Mr. Buescher made the motion to recommend approval of the Special Use permit to the Board of Commissioners, seconded by Mr. McArn.

Vote: For - Buescher, McArn, Holden

Against – Sledge, Mitchell, Solomon, Paylor, Brown, Mann

Abstain – Wallace

The Board voted against approval of the permit, and will recommend denial of the proposal to the Board of Commissioners.

2. Other Business

Mr. Hammerbacher provided an update to the board concerning projects the Planning Department is currently working on or plans to begin soon, including updates to the UDO and a small area plan. Also, the county is seeing an increase in permits for new residential and commercial projects.

Kevin Lewis presented a draft of a census analysis of Franklin County, which compared population, housing, education and employment of county residents from 2000 to 2010.

With there being no further business before the Planning Board, Mr. Wallace adjourned the meeting at 8:30 P.M.

William Wallace – Chairman
Franklin County Planning Board

Kevin Lewis – Clerk
Franklin County Planning Board