

STRABAN TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION

John Hartzell, George Mauser, Chad Waddell, Dan Wilkinson and Jim Hoffman

The Straban Township Planning Commission met this date, as publicly advertised, at 7:00 p.m. This meeting was held in the meeting room of the Straban Township Municipal Building, 1745 Granite Station Road, Gettysburg, PA 17325. Chairman John Hartzell; Vice-Chairman George Mauser; Members Chad Waddell, Dan Wilkinson and Jim Hoffman; and Township Engineer Erik Vranich were present. Shannon Schake, Zoning Officer was present by Zoom.

Others in attendance: Riley Redding; Tony Yonnone, SolAmerica Energy; Debbie Redding Arnold; Bob Arnold; Crissy Redding; Douglas Redding; Pamela Redding; Brian Redding; Kim Guise; Rebecca Nas; Tony Sanders; Pat Redding; Don Miller; Cole Redding; and Skip Strayer.

Public Comment/Agenda Items:

Brian Redding – Landowner - Zoning Ordinance and Zoning Map changes. As a landowner who has considered solar facilities, and chosen it for my property, I believe I am well versed on the subject. I have conducted plenty of research to better educate myself on solar energy. I addressed both the positives and negatives of long-term solar energy agreements. This was important to me and my family to make a proper and well-informed decision whether to proceed with solar or not.

This is a low impact land use that has increased the tax base with little to no effect on infrastructure such as traffic, water, sewer, schools, and emergency services. After a predetermined amount of time, it is decommissioned and returned to its prior use. Based on the information I have learned and personal involvement with the Adams Solar project over the last Five years I believe solar facilities should remain a use by right in the R-1 and RR zoning districts. Landowners should have the right to decide for themselves.

Doug Redding – Landowner – One solar project has come to fruition in 13 years the use by right in the R-1 and R-R Zoning Districts. Solar had just begun construction when the zoning map discussions appeared on the agenda for the Planning Commission meetings in March of this year. To remove property owner's rights of 2/3 of the township land map would require a very compelling argument. After reviewing meeting minutes, I cannot find the problem that the overlay map is the solution for. In fact, the motivating source to limit the solar facilities in the township appears to be absent from the meeting minutes. Many parcels in the R-1 and R-R are already in farm land preservation and could not participate in the solar project. Other properties simply do not meet the criteria due to slope, wetlands, parcel size and access to existing utility features. The text of the current zoning ordinance also includes many other requirements that need to be met to further restrict which land parcels could be used for solar within the township. In addition to this the landowner would have to be willing to participate as well. I see no need to remove this right from nearly all landowners in this township.

Crissy Redding – I am here tonight to have a better understand of the dynamics of the conversation. In my opinion there is a very fine line between land owners' rights and land preservation. To have a usage that has been approved and then deny a landowner that right and to retract something that was previously approved is an agenda produced dynamic. We all know that change is inevitable. I am part of that change. I am opposed to removing that right from the landowners.

Minutes:

Mr. Waddell moved, seconded by Mr. Mauser to approve the November 15, 2023 minutes as presented. Motion carried unanimously.

Land Use Reviews (Preliminary/Final Plans):

Granite Lake – Preliminary Subdivision Plan (250 Natural Springs Road) - **Must act by 01/03/2024**

Mr. Vranich indicated that a resubmission should occur by the end of the year. Mr. Vranich has no issues.

Mr. Mauser moved, second by Mr. Hoffman to recommend approval of the request for time extension to April 3, 2024 on the Granite Lake Preliminary Subdivision Plan in accordance with the letter from Penn Terra Engineering, Inc. dated December 19, 2023. Motion carried unanimously.

Union Square – Preliminary/Final Land Development and Lot Consolidation Plan (83 Hunterstown Road) – **Must act by 02/14/24**

No action.

Crownstone Dealership – Preliminary Subdivision and Land Development Plan (3140 York Road) – **Must act by 03/22/24**

No action.

Granite Hill Solar Electric Facility – Preliminary/Final Subdivision Plan – **Must act by 03/15/24**

No action.

Helicopter Applicators, Inc. – Preliminary/Final Land Development Plan (1670 York Road) – Must act by 01/18/24

No resubmission. Mr. Vranich has no concerns with this plan.

Mr. Mauser moved, second by Mr. Wilkinson to recommend approval of the request for time extension to March 31, 2024 for the Helicopter Applicators, Inc. Preliminary/Final Land Development Plan in accordance with the letter from Johnston & Associates, Inc. dated December 15, 2023. Motion carried unanimously.

APPEARANCES:

Brian and Pamela Redding – Solar land Lease already in place based on current zoning – Pam is the owner of the property on Old Harrisburg Road. She prepared a packet for the Commission to show that back in 2019-2020 they changed that property from MU-2 to R-1. July 2019 proposed a map text amendment from MU-2 to R-1 District. The R-1 District is less intense use. Went through the process of informing the surrounding property owners of this change. Had support of all the surrounding property owners. Sandy and Lawrence Martin did not want their property changed but they did not oppose what they wanted to do. Full support of the Planning Commission in 2019. When the map amendment was given to the Board of Supervisors, they approved it. Adams Solar did not need this property. They entered into a lease agreement on September 23, 2020 with SolAmerica Energy. SolAmerica Energy is a smaller project than the Adams Solar. A solar energy facility could be proposed that included this property and the Miller property that are on the same road. This overlay also would include portions of the Adams Solar project and allowing for some more. How did we go from full support of this use for 13 years to it being lost? I propose a smaller community project down to the High School and make a rectangular area. We request that you take adequate time to consider this request. He requested that this matter be tabled and not moved forward to the Board of Supervisors.

Memo from Patrick Morris, Adams Solar – To date Adams Solar LLC has paid \$571,056.48 towards roll back taxes associated with the project. In addition, we have paid \$68,698.87 for school taxes. These figures are based on the most recent tax bills that had been received from landowners involved with the project. We will address additional bills as they are received with updated tax assessments. We estimate those bills to total around \$500,000.00 for rollback taxes and another \$50,000.00 for School taxes.

\$1.1 Million on roll back taxes and \$140,000.00 on School Taxes. Roll back taxes go to the Farm Land Preservation fund and matched from the County General Fund of \$250,000.00. The State matches dollar for dollar. A sizeable amount to go to Farm Land Preservation.

The Redding family has 448 acres of land in solar as preservation.

Anthony Yonnone, Matt Short, and Alviez Chagan (SolAmerica Energy) – opportunity to offer suggestions for improvements to the language of the amendment –

Tony Yonnone – SolAmerica Energy - Develop community scale solar projects. He went over the legal actions that needed to happen and did not think it was done properly. Asked that this be tabled tonight until they are sure that the notice was given properly.

He handed out information about his project. Net Energy billing is that they are selling rights to company. These are preservation not like building houses which are in perpetuity. We are taking property out of farm land for a time and then it goes back to farm land. Create a new solar area overlay as Mr. Redding suggested. You can do a special exception process on smaller solar projects. You can allow for the rights that these people have relied on for years.

John – should they send a letter to the Planning Commission as recommendations?

Erik – explained the process, the Commission worked on this Ordinance for a number of months and asked the Board of Supervisors if this was something they wanted to consider; the Board of Supervisors moved this back to the Planning Commission and the Adams County Office of Planning and Development for review and comment. The Commission is to take comments under advisement and then recommend to the Board of Supervisors to move forward or table it. The comments should be submitted to the Township during the public comment period. The Board of Supervisors will make the final decision.

Mr. Yonnone went over his proposed revisions with the Commission that he would like to see in Sections 7 and 8 on the draft Ordinance. These would be substantial changes. Provide these changes to the township in writing.

Erik – in perspective we have 80 MWac with 16 different properties which is around 800 acres. (80 divided by 16 equals about 5 MWac per acre). Similar appearance as these other solar farms.

Donald P. Miller – Solar Energy System Overlay –

This is something we have been working on and thinking about for years. We were not sure if it was going to go through or not. When I saw the overlay map I was surprised and don't really understand it. Please reconsider and think about this hard before making a decision. What is driving this change?

John Hartzell – looking at Straban Township overall. I thought about the growth of solar in Straban. We have two full projects in the township. My perspective was there is need for electricity everywhere but I don't think Straban should be bearing the burden of being the primary solar location in Adams County. I'm looking at it from a map review and looked at the options that we had. Our duty is for the Township at large.

George Mauser – The solar stuff has been going on for 20 years. In my time on the Planning Commission, we have learned a lot about solar in the last 6 years. We are trying to provide balance in the township. It seemed like this land use was getting way out of balance so the zoning map is an attempt to provide a balance on all interests.

OLD/NEW BUSINESS:

Zoning Ordinance/Map amendments – A draft of the Ordinance that has been available for public comment has been reviewed by the Commission. The township did not receive official comments back from Adams County Office of Planning and Development; however, it did receive two (2) minor recommendations. Only suggestion they had on the ordinance was on pages 8-9:

1. Landscaping to blend in with existing tree lines and existing vegetation.
2. Include any agricultural BMPs that are still required to be maintained within the lifespan of the practice, unless approval is obtained by the funding agency for any impact associated with the PSES project. Adding a level of checking.

None of these suggestions are substantive, they are considered clarification changes. If the Planning Commission agrees with these changes, they can recommend them to the Board of Supervisors.

Mr. Hartzell moved, seconded by Mr. Mauser to recommend the Board of Supervisors approve the revised draft Ordinance which includes clarifications suggested by the Adams County Office of Planning and Developments. Motion carried unanimously.

PUBLIC COMMENT/GENERAL:

Tony Sanders - Posting of the property. Shannon, were the properties posted?

Shannon Schake - The properties where posted in the suggested places of the solicitor which where to post around the overlay. One posting at the bridge on Woodside Rd; one posting at Red Bridge and Woodside junction; one posting at the bridge at Beaver Run Road; and one posting at the very end of Red Bridge Road towards the next township. This posting surrounded the overlay area.

Brian Redding – if its already approved for solar would you not post the properties that the use is being taken away from? It seems opposite to me.

Pamela Redding – were the landowners notified? This township needs more electricity with all the houses being built. If you talk about balance, we chose balance. A portion of the farm is solar, the rest of the land is being farmed. We picked balance.

Adjournment

**Mr. Mauser moved, seconded by Mr. Hartzell to adjourn the meeting at 8:31 p.m.
Motion carried unanimously.**

NEXT MEETING: SUPERVISORS: January 2, 2024
PLANNING COMMISSION: January 24, 2024

Respectfully Submitted,

Briana A. White, Assistant Secretary