

MINUTES
Blue Earth County Planning Commission
Regular Meeting
Wednesday December 2, 2015
7:00 p.m.

1. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m. by Chairman Lyle Femrite. Planning Commission members present were Bill Anderson, Kurt Anderson, Kip Bruender, Lyle Femrite, Chuck Grams, Berry Jacques and Joe Smentek. County staff members Aaron Stubbs, Chris Meeks, Ben Effah and George Leary were also present.

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Mr. Bruender made a motion to approve the minutes from the November 4, 2015 Regular Planning Commission Meeting. Mr. Smentek seconded the motion which carried unanimously.

3. AGENDA APPROVAL

Mr. Leary indicated there was no change to the agenda.

4. NEW BUSINESS

PC 31-15

Anthony & Catharine Nass- Request for review and approval of the Final Plat of the Nass Subdivision. A subdivision plat consisting of one lot and two outlots. The property is located in the Northeast Quarter of the Northwest Quarter, part of the Northwest Quarter of the Northwest Quarter, part of the Southwest Quarter of the Northwest Quarter and part of the Southeast Quarter of the Northwest Quarter, all located within Section 36, Sterling Township and is zoned Conservation. The property is also located in the Shoreland Overlay District of Lura Lake which is listed as a Natural Environment Lake by the Minnesota DNR.

Mr. Effah presented the staff report.

The applicants were present and had no initial comment.

Mr. Femrite noted the proposal does not include a turnaround at the end of the township road.

Mrs. Nass commented that currently they are turning around on the neighbor's yard.

There was no further public comment.

Following the discussion, Mr. Kurt Anderson made a motion to forward a recommendation of approval of the request to the County Board. Mr. Grams seconded the motion and the motion carried unanimously.

PC 32-15

Leo & Sandra Koppelman and SunEdison Inc. – Request for a Conditional Use Permit to construct and operate a Large Solar Energy System. The proposed project will span an estimated 36.57 acres and will have a power capacity of up to 5 Megawatts (MW), which by Blue Earth County standards classifies it as a Large

Energy System. The property is zoned Agricultural is located in part of the Southern Half of the Southeast Quarter of Section 6, LeRay Township.

Mr. Stubbs presented the staff report.

The applicants were present along with Mark Zwiig from SunEdison, Inc. Mr. Zwiig indicated that construction of the project would not likely start until May of 2016 and be completed by the fall of 2016.

Mike Guentzel indicated his concern with the potential impact the installation may have on the drainage system. He asked if the replacement branch of the county tile should not be installed first.

Mr. Stubbs advised the Commission that the replacement branch would in fact be installed first and that the construction of the project would not start without approval from the County Ditch Manager.

Mr. Guentzel asked if the tile replacement will take into account the future plans of the county tile.

Mr. Stubbs commented that it will and that it is being reviewed by the County Ditch Manager.

There was no other public comment.

Mr. Smentek asked if the private tile lines are tied into the branch line.

Mr. Stubbs did not know the answer to Mr. Smentek's question.

Following the discussion, Mr. Bruender made a motion to forward a recommendation of approval of the request to the County Board. Mr. Smentek seconded the motion and the motion carried unanimously.

PC 33-15

Karl M. Fredericksen Life Estate and Jeffery & Karri Fredericksen - Request for review and approval of the Preliminary and Final Plats of the Fredericksen Subdivision consisting of four outlots. The property is zoned Agricultural and is located in the Southeast Quarter of the Southeast Quarter of Section 6 of Garden City Township and in the Northeast Quarter of the Northeast Quarter of Section 7 of Garden City Township.

Mr. Effah presented the staff report.

The Applicants were represented by ISG Engineering and attorney Randy Zellmer.

There was no public comment and little discussion by the Planning Commission.

Following the discussion, Mr. Smentek made a motion to forward a recommendation of approval of the request to the County Board. Mr. Bill Anderson seconded the motion and the motion carried unanimously.

PC 34-15

John & Anne Frey and Ecoplexus Inc. – Request for a Conditional Use Permit to construct and operate a Large Solar Energy System. The proposed project will span an estimated 28.6 acres and will have a power capacity of up to 5 Megawatts (MW), which by Blue Earth County standards, classifies it as a Large Energy System. The property is zoned Agricultural is located in the Eastern Half of the Southeast Quarter of Section 15, Lincoln Township.

Mr. Stubbs presented the staff report.

The applicants were present.

Nathan Rogers from Ecoplexus Inc. advised the Commission that the proposed solar panel area will actually cover approximately 40 acres vs. the 28.6 acres indicated by staff. Mr. Rogers also commented on the 130 foot setback to the centerline of the county road and the concern this has created of moving the project west and possibly impacting the nearby wetland.

Mr. Stubbs advised the Commission his acreage calculations were based upon the submittal from the applicants.

Mr. Rogers commented on the process used by their engineers to determine area of the panels. He acknowledged that their application did not show the larger panel area. He went on to further explain the process their engineers use for site layouts.

Ralph Campbell advised the Commission that he farms on two sides of the proposal. He asked if there are any restrictions on the construction of buildings on neighboring properties. He asked about the height of the fence, adding that they have cattle nearby and wondered what liability they may have if their cattle got out and onto the solar site. He also asked if there are any issues associated with stray voltage. Mr. Campbell commented that the soil in the area is sandy.

Mr. Femrite indicated that it is not likely the project will include a lot of dirt work and when decommissioned, it will likely be farmed again. Mr. Femrite also indicated he could not address the stray voltage question.

The height of the fence was discussed. Mr. Stubbs advised the Commission of what is allowed by the standards of the county code. He further advised the Commission that a fence is not a requirement of the solar standards.

Future neighboring structures was discussed. Mr. Leary advised the Commission that the ordinance takes into account the relationship of the proposal to structures on neighboring properties.

Anne Frey asked for clarification on condition number 6.

Mr. Stubbs indicated it has been added to protect the wetland to the southwest that is not shown to be within the layout of the project.

Mr. Femrite opined that the issue before the Commission is the 28 acre proposal.

Following the discussion, Mr. Kurt Anderson made a motion to forward a recommendation of approval of the request to the County Board. Mr. Smentek seconded the motion and the motion carried unanimously.

ADJOURNMENT

There was no further business. Mr. Smentek made a motion to adjourn the meeting which was seconded by Mr. Jacques and the meeting was adjourned at 8:44 p.m.

Planning Commission Chair

Date

Planning Commission Secretary

Date