

Note: These minutes are not official until approved by the Planning & Zoning Committee at a subsequent meeting. Please refer to the meeting minutes when these minutes are approved to obtain any changes to these minutes.

DeKalb County Government
Sycamore, Illinois

Planning and Zoning Committee Minutes
(March 22, 2017)

The Planning and Zoning Committee of the DeKalb County Board met March 22, 2017 at 6:30 p.m. in the DeKalb County Administrative Building, Conference Room East, in Sycamore, Illinois. In attendance were Committee Members: Kevin Bunge, Dan Cribben, Steve Faivre, Tracy Jones, Mark Pietrowski, Craig Roman, and Suanne Willis. Also in attendance were approximately 17 members of the public, including County Board Member Roy Plote and Greg Milburg (DeKalb County Farm Bureau), and Planning, Zoning, and Building Department Staff: Derek Hiland, Steve Julseth, and Marcellus Anderson.

Mr. Faivre, Planning and Zoning Chairman, called the meeting to order. Committee Member Tracy Jones Arrived late.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Ms. Willis moved to approve the agenda, seconded by Mr. Cribben, and the motion carried unanimously.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Mr. Pietrowski moved to approve the minutes of the February 22, 2017 meeting, seconded by Mr. Cribben, and the motion carried unanimously.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Brad Belanger read a statement congratulating the County Board for passing a moratorium on new sustainable energy farms/gardens until such time as the Board develops and passes a sustainable energy ordinance to regulate such uses. He also thanked for Board for its efforts in developing such regulations and expressed the expectations of himself and others regarding those regulations.

OLD BUSINESS

There was no old business.

NEW BUSINESS

There was no new business.

OTHER BUSINESS – DISCUSSION ON WIND FARM / SOLAR FARM ORDINANCE RESEARCH

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Mr. Hiland reported that at the February 22, 2017 Planning & Zoning Committee meeting, the Committee committed to a process to identify, evaluate, and perhaps implement a sustainability ordinance for DeKalb County regarding commercial wind / solar farms. He reported that the first step of the process was the passage of a moratorium on sustainable energy, and that at its March 15, 2017 meeting, the County Board adopted a moratorium for a period of eighteen months or the approval of a sustainable energy ordinance, whichever came first. Mr. Hiland noted that the Committee had also directed staff to research other ordinances adopted throughout the State of Illinois and identify other resources that would aid in the drafting of a sustainability ordinance. He then informed the Committee that their packets included for their review three (3) pages of links that would direct them to certain County's ordinances and research done regarding sustainable energy and a copy of the Kansas Township Ordinance from Kansas, Illinois.

Mr. Pietrowski noted that Ms. Willis and Mr. Bunge had also found and forwarded to the Committee members a number of resources.

Mr. Bunge noted that the amount of data he found was daunting. Adding, that while there was no need to "recreate the wheel", they needed to carefully examine the ordinances adopted by other communities because the various elements of those ordinances may have been tailored to address specific local issues in the subject community and may not necessarily be applicable to DeKalb County. He also warned the Committee to beware of the "10% creep" he noted when reviewing many of the ordinances, which he described as a tendency of some municipalities and counties to take an existing ordinance, increase elements like setbacks by 10%, and then adopt it as their own. Mr. Pietrowski agreed that how the communities developed their studies and ordinances need to be closely examined, emphasizing the need to develop good policy.

Mr. Bunge noted that they should pay close attention to the density of population affected by the wind farms in the various studies, and how it compared to the population density of DeKalb County.

Mr. Hiland gave some examples of the information he had compiled, noting the extreme differences between some of the studies.

Ms. Willis gave some examples of the setbacks she came across in her research and expressed her concerns with the information she found.

Mr. Faivre said that the Committee should also take into consideration the opposition voiced by various communities and the foundation of those concerns, noting the need to carefully research what was claimed to have happened.

Mr. Pietrowski stated that while the current discussion focused on large-scale commercial projects, the Committee may need to also look into personal wind and solar systems.

Mr. Faivre recognized Roy Plote (County Board member), who voiced concerns related to him that the larger wind towers affected the natural climate of the local area. He suggested that farmers with lands

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adjoining existing wind towers be questioned regarding any impacts they may have suffered. Mr. Pietrowski noted that the proposed towers will be taller than the existing local towers and would likely not be a good comparison.

Tracy Jones arrived at the meeting.

Mr. Faivre recognized Jim Hutcheson, who related experiences told to him by his father Bob Hutcheson, who served on the County Board during the time the previous wind farm was being examined for approval. He said that when the County Board members at that time went on tours of existing wind farms, Mr. Hutcheson had difficulty getting the people who lived in proximity of existing wind towers to talk to him about their thoughts on the wind towers. Mr. Faivre also recognized Mel Hass, who warned the Committee of the veracity of sponsored tours of existing wind farms, and the information provided. The Committee discussed the pros and cons of possibly taking a tour of some existing facilities, and how such a tour might be conducted. Mr. Hiland noted that he was going to speak to the Illinois Attorney General's Office concerning the various concerns expressed regarding a possible tour, and would explore the steps necessary to conduct such a tour, in case the Committee choose to do so.

Mr. Faivre stated that he did not think a tour would be necessary, and that the focus of that night's discussion was on what steps should occur next. He expressed his thoughts that the Committee should explore the various links gathered to get a clearer picture of what kind of regulations exist. Mr. Hiland noted that he had noticed some common themes, such as setbacks and density of towers in a given area. Mr. Jones suggested picking out 10 common factors and creating a chart comparing the various ordinances. Mr. Jones and Mr. Faivre suggested that the year that the ordinance was created would be important. Mr. Bunge repeated the desirability of gathering population data for the areas covered by the various ordinances. Mr. Pietrowski noted that many people have expressed a concern regarding property values around wind towers, and requested that they also be looked at. Ms. Willis noted that just because a number of ordinances may have adopted a particular regulation, did not mean the regulation was necessarily based in fact and all gathered information needed to be carefully evaluated. Mr. Hiland added that decommissioning was an issue that would also be charted. Mr. Hiland stated that staff would begin working on developing a matrix of common points in the various ordinances and would attempt to have something prepared by the April 26th Committee meeting, but that staff may need until the May 24th to compile all of the information.

Mr. Plote related that the Farmland Foundation expressed the need to be more studious in where wind towers are allowed to be located, suggesting that the Committee may want to consider regulation similar to the "40-acre" rule be applied to wind towers. He also related that Lee County required that wind towers pass a Land Evaluation and Site Assessment (LESA), to limit placement of wind towers to lands with low productivity.

Mr. Jones noted that the Committee also needed to examine solar farms. Mr. Bunge described the effects of solar farms as being very different from wind farms, expressing concern about the effect on these systems on soil quality, and relating his experience of being near a large solar instillation located near

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Rockford Airport. Mr. Pietrowski related that while he supported the use of private solar systems, he was concerned that the proposed commercial developments would be removing acres of farmland from production. Mr. Faivre related that he had learned that one of the solar companies considering locating in the County was looking for 160 to 320 acres for their instillation. Ms. Willis noted that with solar, the concern was on land use and its impact on the land, and with wind, it was the impacts on the neighboring properties.

An audience member related their concerns regarding the effect of wind towers on nearby radio towers.

An audience member implored the Committee to consider the visual impact of numerous wind towers and their effect on those exposed to a view of them. Ms. Willis responded that the impact of their visual presence on the surrounding area would be a consideration, and suggested that a diagram of how they would look might be helpful.

An audience member related that Paw Paw was decommissioning a couple towers so that bigger ones could be erected in their place, and expressed concern that such a thing might happen with the wind towers in this county. Ms. Willis explained that the ordinances are written such that each tower is permitted separately and that the permit for an existing tower did not mean that it could just be demolished and a newer, bigger one could be installed. Mr. Hiland added that any ordinance crafted by the Committee would contain language requiring zoning approval by the County Board to alter an approved wind tower.

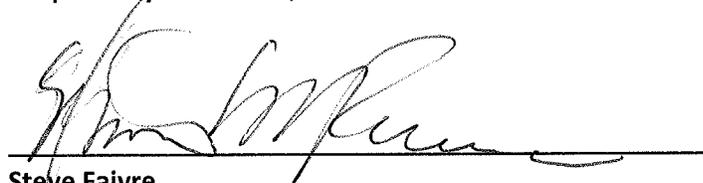
OTHER BUSINESS – UPDATE ON DEPARTMENT STAFFING

Mr. Hiland introduced Steve Julseth, the new Chief Building Inspector, to the Committee.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Pietrowski motioned to adjourn, seconded by Mr. Roman, and the motion carried unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,



Steve Faivre
Chairman, Planning and Zoning Committee

Moa: moa

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