

**Lake Township Planning Commission
Regular Meeting
June 12, 2024
4988 W. Kinde Rd, Caseville MI 48275**

Approved Minutes

The meeting was called to order at 6:05 by Siver at the Lake Township Hall.

Roll call: Keith Hoffman, Bob Siver, Nicole Collins, Matt Pryor, Tim Quinn present.

Supervisor, Valerie McCallum present.

Approval of Agenda: Motion made by Collins to approve the agenda, seconded by Hoffman. All ayes – passed.

Approval of Minutes: Motion made by Collins to approve the May 8, 2024 Minutes, seconded by Quinn. All ayes – passed.

Correspondence: None

New Business:

Siver referred to the ordinances regarding the wind, solar and battery storage and stated the Public Hearing has been scheduled for 07/02/2024. Hoffman stated some of his concerns under the solar energy ordinance is: how does the municipality ensure the company will maintain the grass under the panel arrays, how does the municipality ensure the company will not harm animal and plant habitats, and, how does the municipality ensure the company will train local fire departments in the handling of fires associated with the solar panels. Hoffman further stated his concerns under the battery storage ordinance are, what system of fire protection is available and what training will local fire departments receive and what safety measures will be taken related to thermal runaway; faulty battery management systems, including bad hardware or software, insufficient electrical isolation and environmental contamination from humidity and dust, for example. Collins stated she attended a webinar regarding battery storage and it was discussed that when batteries do blow up, the area needs to be evacuated immediately 150 feet away; the ordinance currently has a 50' setback from the property line. Collins further stated that when the batteries do explode and toxins are released, according to the webinar evacuation is a quarter mile and the township may want to look at increasing the setback as much as it can; 50 feet from a non-participating property is too close.

Quinn referred to page 4, 7a of the battery storage ordinance and asked where an adequate supply of water is located within the township. Hoffman referred to page 5, 7c, "The Utility-Scale Battery Energy Storage System must comply with the fire protection plan as approved

by the fire chief (or **[emphasis added]** as approved by the Township Board in the event of an appeal}.” Siver suggested a mandate be put in place to require a sufficient water supply on site; Hoffman stated that would be part of the fire safety plan; possibly build a water tower to collect rain water.

After lengthy discussion on fire safety, Siver stated that safety issues are the most salient and suggested scheduling a meeting before the public hearing with the Caseville Fire Chief to discuss fire safety issues and what the fire department has done to prepare for these issues.

McCallum stated a question for the attorney is clarification on battery storage inspections in a farm field over drain tiles and what impact that could have for farmers; the issue of drain tiles is addressed in the wind and solar ordinances but under the battery ordinance, it is not addressed but should be due to the toxicity of the batteries.

A discussion took place regarding Section 7.29.C. of the Utility-Scale Battery Energy Storage Systems Ordinance. The PC agreed that C.1. *Minimum Coverage* should be a minimum of five (5) acres; C.2. *Lot Area Coverage* should be no more than 50% of the total lot area and C.3. *Setbacks* should be at least 300 feet from all lot lines, community buildings and dwellings on non-participating properties.

A discussion continued on the Utility-Scale Battery Energy Storage Systems Ordinance, Section 7.29.A.3.a. *Light Industrial* and the PC suggested, if required, designating Sections 35 or 36 in Lake Township for light industrial. Collins asked what the implications would be if agricultural land is re-zoned as industrial. McCallum stated re-zoning would not have any implications on taxes but further stated clarification is needed on whether light industrial can be put on PA 116 land. Quinn asked whether the Township should have conversations with property owners in the potential light industrial areas to see how receptive they would be; Collins stated if it’s an overlay district and zoning is not being changed, she doesn’t think it is necessary. Siver stated the Township should communicate with the property owners regardless.

The discussion circled back to setting up a meeting with the Caseville Fire Chief; Siver will attempt to set up the meeting to take place prior to the Public Hearing.

Siver stated that the language in the battery storage ordinance relating to a fire protection plan should be added to the solar ordinance. After lengthy discussion, the PC suggested adding the language from the Utility-Scale Battery Energy Storage Systems Section 7.29.B. 11 and 12 to the to Section 7.30.Solar Energy Systems Ordinance under C.2.14. under (a) and (b).

Hoffman suggested language in the Solar Energy Systems Ordinance, Section 7.30.C.g. to address grass maintenance and animal and plant maintenance. McCallum referred the PC to the ordinance sample from Bloom and the PC agreed the language regarding screening, landscaping, and visual impact as well as ground cover should be included in the Solar Energy Systems Ordinance. Hoffman suggested and the PC agreed that the ground cover language should read “Ground Cover: Native pollenating plants shall be planted (and maintained) between **and under** solar panel rows as ground cover for bees, butterflies, birds,

and other wildlife...” The PC further agreed to add the language from the ordinance sample under Section 12. Wildlife and Environmental Protection and under Section 21. Additional Submittal Materials, b, c and d, and Section 22. Emergency Personnel to the Solar Energy Systems Ordinance.

The PC further agreed that the south ½ of Section 35 of Lake Township be designated under Section 7.30.4. of the Solar Energy Systems Ordinance and to add the language from D. Commercial Solar Energy Systems under PA 233 of the solar ordinance, “This subsection does not apply if PA 233 of 2023 is repealed, enjoined, or otherwise not in effect...” to the Wind Energy Ordinance.

Motion by Collins to send the PC’s suggested changes to the ordinances to the attorney for corrections, seconded by Pryer. All ayes – passed.

Old Business:

Zoning Ordinance Amendments: Siver suggested and the PC members agreed to address the Zoning Ordinance Amendments at a future meeting.

Signing of the By-Laws: The PC members signed the By-Laws.

Public Comments: None

Motion made by Collins to adjourn, seconded by Hoffman. All ayes – passed.

Meeting adjourned at 8:14 p.m.

Next meeting Wednesday, July 10, 2024 at 6:00 p.m.

Submitted by Lisa Clinton