

Meeting Minutes March 12th, 2024

Meeting Called to Order: 7:00 p.m

Roll Call:

Present: Mike McGriff – Chair, John Dennis – Vice Chair, Franz Neruda, Leigh Grimes – Fill in Recording Secretary, Nick Weaver

Absent: Collen Skrypkun – Recording Secretary, Stephen Sullivan

Approval of Agenda: Tabled to April 9th, 2024

Additions to the Agenda: N/A

Public Comment (On Agenda Items):

Chris Barto; 4670 Metcalf – Still opposed.

Jill Barto: 4670 Metcalf - Opposed

Pat Phare (sp?): 4926 McIntyre – Opposed

Helen Hermes: 5645 Sycamore – Opposed. Tried checking into the company's background which seems to be a spider web. Too many International Companies are involved. There is no sunshine in Michigan, these will not work.

Sandra Richardson: 4126 Cole Rd – Not in favor. A lot of homework needs to be done by the planning commission in such a short period. Feels like not being able to follow who owns the company is concerning. Concerned about lawsuits. Resumes are very important regarding the information that is on them, and Ranger Powers' Resume does not seem to be very polished. Solar farms should not be exposed to citizens. Concerned about the flyer that went out to the public that did not answer how many acres on each site, and how many acres for the whole project.

Vance Richardson: 4126 Cole Rd – Would like his question in regard to how many acres will be used, answered. He has asked it multiple times. Mr. Richardson showed a map that was provided by Ranger Power, he asked what the blue square is that is marked as a secondary substation. The original, and one discussed during the public hearing is on McIntyre. He asked if they were proposing a second substation and not disclosing it. He would like Portside solar to identify who the members are and where they live. He also asked if they own land here.

Toby from Ranger Power spoke up and stated that a couple of Ranger Power employees are in Chicago, and spread throughout the US.

Mr. Richardson: Asked how many glass panels? It was mentioned P.V Modulators, 77,000 with 7 Inverters and 7 Transformers.

Other questions that were asked, where is the decommissioning list. What is the DB rating at point of origin. How much noise will be put out. And where is the inverter?

Township supervisor spoke up and stated that no questions and answers were to go back and forth between Power Ranger (Toby) and the township residents.

Toby; stated that he wanted to respect the time of the planning commission and that he is available to meet with the public at any time.

Susan Tacey: 5555 Carrigan Rd – Asked why Ranger Power keeps pushing this on people that do not want it.

The Planning Commission Head Chair spoke and stated that the Solar Ordinance was created a few years ago. It is now our job to look at all ordinances affected by the application and compare if the application meets the criteria we have to pass. If it does not, we have to state where, and why.

Mr. Richardson: stated that he just wanted his questions answered.

Bonnie DeShon Township ordinance Coordinator – spoke to the residents and explained that it is the planning commission’s job to look at this application the same way they would the request for a gas station or a pole barn on a resident’s property. The Planning Commission cannot just deny it, it is a process. Just like a gravel pit, they have the right to do business if it follows the ordinance.

It was mentioned by the public that yes, they do have a right, but we the residents have a right that should take priority.

Dennis Mitchell: 5260 North River Rd. – Asked “Didn’t Fort Gratiot turn this down, why don’t we let them sue?”

Mike McGriff stated that we cannot because we have an ordinance in place.

Dennis: Stated “I feel you people want are all for them, you have already approved a campground to go in next to me.

Zoning Administrator Comments/Reports: N/A

Old Business: Ranger Power

Mike McGriff stated that the Planning Commission has its forms of application to go through and discuss the process of the proper procedure and steps to take. We will need to compare it to our ordinances.

Leigh Grimes stated that she would like the names and the contacts of the references used from the public hearing regarding the Market Analysis Reports so that she could contact them. Toby mentioned that he could see if he could gather that information, but that they are referenced in Appendix M.

Leigh Grimes stated that there are Bald Eagles that are nested at the Elks Golf Club, she has seen them fly in a pattern towards the proposed location of the solar farm. A resident at the public hearing mentioned that they also have a nest on a property that is near the solar farm. Leigh asked if they are a protected species, and when is the US Wildlife contacted to look into them.

Toby mentioned that the US Wildlife would be contacted after the 1st permit is pulled if there was evidence of them in the location. Ranger Power has used an environmental Consultant firm that did desktop studies.

John Dennis stated that at the public hearing, the lawyer for Ranger Power mentioned Decibel readings. John asked if that was for new equipment only. What are the decibels on older equipment, such as down the road when a cooling fan goes out? Also how long does it take for Ranger Power to respond to broken equipment?

Toby stated that there are 24/7 Operations.

John also asked if EMF's are released.

Toby stated that he can show studies that they are not.

John mentioned that in his line of work, he witnessed where watches ran backward when close to a transformer.

Operations are noted in Appendix K

Franz Neruda Asked Ranger Power how close the closest employee in Shiawassee is to that specific facility.

Toby was not sure about that particular site but did know that at a facility in Illinois, the closet responder was within 15 minutes. He would gather and provide that information.

Mike McGriff mentioned that in the case of an emergency, we do not have just one fire department that responds. We are also covered by Fort Gratiot and Kimball. Would training be covered on a local level? For only full-time responders, or also volunteer responders?

Toby stated that they have offered to cover training and will do so for responding departments. Any requirements the planning commission creates, they would abide by.

Franz Neruda asked if any special equipment was needed for emergency responders.

Toby stated that extra equipment would not be needed an emergency vehicle, but not a full size, would be able to get to all areas of the solar farm.

Nick Weaver mentioned that he has driven by the solar farm that is located at 94/69 near Battle Creek. It is all grass underneath it. That makes him question if there is a drought, are the solar panels susceptible to lightning strikes that could cause a grass fire?

Toby stated that he had no experience with that but would look into the information.

Nick stated that he wants data on any fires located at solar sites.

Toby stated that he would provide.

Leigh Grimes asked if the equipment was grounded.

Toby stated yes.

John Dennis asked, when Ranger Power is looking for sites to build on why do they not consider land with no use? St. Clair County has a power plant that was torn down, and transmission lines already exist.

Toby stated that they are privately owned and would need to be interested. The land they are looking at has landowners that are interested in partnership. He also mentioned that they do not have eminent domain.

Franz Neruda asked if the location in Greenwood township that is clearing land going to be a site for Ranger Power

Toby stated that it was not.

Sam (also in attendance with Ranger Power) Explained how power plants are not producing enough power straight to the transformers, proposing a need in the future for Michigan to need more energy. Demand is driving the market for solar farms.

Leigh Grimes asked. Do you have a decommissioning list in place? More directly, do you have a list of the contractors that will be doing the decommissioning? Do you know how much that decommissioning will cost? Do you know where ALL the equipment will be going? (Are there landfills already in place that you know will take this equipment when the time comes.)

Toby stated that he did not have that information but would investigate it.

Leigh Grimes stated that that is a concern if you can say that these panels have approximately a 25-year life span but have not had any panels that are that old. The decommissioning bond that is in place does not mean anything if there is no location for the equipment to go when it is no longer in use.

Franz Neruda stated that he is new to the planning commission and trying to get caught up to speed. What is the lifespan of a solar farm?

Toby stated 25 to 30 years depending on the manufacturer.

Leigh Grimes asked, regarding the manufacturer how do you know/decide if it is a quality company?

Toby stated that the equipment used is the highest grade, and grading is based on a ranking system.

Mike McGriff asked if the panels could be replaced to keep the field operating.
Leigh Grimes asked if all the leases involved in the project were for the same amount of time.
Toby stated the answer was yes, for 40 years.

Mike McGriff stated that the quality of the reports does not match those that are supplied.
Toby stated it is up to the planning commission to decide the quality of the reports.

Franz Neruda stated that after listening to a resident at the public hearing quote WHO, does Ranger Power have data on long-term or short-term effects from the WHO
Toby stated that he has not heard nor seen that report or data. He would be happy to investigate the accuracy of the report referenced.

Leigh Grimes made a motion that the planning commission would investigate the presentation packet/application and compare it to all ordinances involved at the next planning commission meeting.

Nick Weaver Seconded the motion.

All in Favor

Non opposed.

Franz Neruda stated that all residents can drop off any questions in writing to the township.
Toby stated that Ranger Power would answer all questions in writing.

John Dennis asked if we were tabling the chicken ordinance topic.

Bonnie DeShon stated that the township board approved a moratorium so that further conversation does not need to happen immediately.

Public Comments:

Helen Hermes: You ask us to follow the rules. Please follow the rules and speak with your microphones. Sitting on that side of the table is difficult. Please respect the job that they must do. Insist that the final say should be about what the residents want. Helen also stated to the public that you need to come into the township and control what the ordinances are.

The public asked if the ordinance could state "we the people."

Mike McGriff said that we would have to ask the attorney.

The public asked it to be addressed.

Mike McGriff stated that we as the planning commission do believe in transparency.

Susan Richardson stated that there is a ton of information that has been acquired, and to not just accept the information that has been provided but to do our research into resources.

Franz Neruda pointed out that we are all residents.

Leigh Grimes Stated that she would be looking into the Real Estate reports provided and gathering more information.

Mike McGriff stated that with conflicting reports we are looking into information and Ranger Power is providing answers to questions.

Vance Richardson: 1) sounds like we will get answers 2) Substation on the diagram that was not part of the public hearing, no information was provided to the public 3) does the second substation not follow procedure, will that be eminent domain?

Franz Neruda asked the residents to please write down all questions and submit them to the township.

Vance Richardson stated that he feels the board was taken by surprise at the second substation and no mention at the public hearing, that it is twice the size the footprint states.

Franz Neruda promised that the questions in writing will have answers received in writing.

Meeting Adjourned: 8:40