

RECORD OF PROCEEDINGS

WALNUT TOWNSHIP, FAIRFIELD COUNTY, OH – ZONING COMMISSION (ZC)

11420 Millersport Rd., Millersport, OH 43067

REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

March 16, 2023

Board of Zoning Appeals members present/absent

Members present - Charles Pillon, Greg Groves, Ben Patterson, Dick Williams, Jim Upp

Zoning Inspector: Mike Berry - present

Number of members of the public present:

1. Wayne Harris 4185 Canal Road NE
2. Daryl Jarett 4241 Canal Road NE
3. Greg Weber 4160 Canal Road NE
4. Sue Weber 4160 Canal Road NE
5. Barb & Frank Martin 9370 Cattail Road NE
6. Justine George 5760 Elder Road
7. Red Wayne 3960 Baltimore-Somerset Road
8. Glenn Henry 5505 Forest Highland G Westerville
9. Seth Pymer 3464 South Bank Road NE Millersport
10. Sherry Pymer 3464 South Bank Road NE Millersport
11. Lisa Thomas SR 256 Pleasantville
12. David & Wendy Smalley 4135 Walnut Road Lot 29, Buckeye Lake
13. Vic Runkle 3354 South Bank Road

The meeting was called to order at 7:01 PM by Zoning Commission Chairman Charles Pillon and the pledge of Allegiance to the flag was recited.

Zoning inspector Mike Berry introduced the newest member of the Zoning Commission: Jim Upp. He said that the alternate position is still open.

Approval of Minutes:

The minutes for February 16, 2023 Regular Meeting were presented for approval as edited. Dick Williams stated discussion on the motion to approve reflected parking regulations and was moved from 10.10 parking and moved to 10.7, where it was more appropriate. Chair Charles Pillon made a motion to approve the minutes. Ben Patterson seconded the motion. The motion passed with 5 yes votes.

Roll Call Vote:

Pillon, Yes - Patterson, - Yes, Williams, Yes - Upp, - Yes, - Groves, Yes

OLD BUSINESS

No old business was discussed.

NEW BUSINESS

Zoning Inspector Mike Berry presented a Solar Energy Systems Regulation for Residential, Commercial and Industrial Solar Energy Systems (SES) for 49 megawatts and less that was voted on by the Walnut Township Trustees. Mike Berry said that the Zoning Commission would need to certify this SES at tonight's meeting. Mike explained that the Zoning Commission was not voting on the SES, but "certifying" and sending it to Regional Planning. He said that the SES would need to be sent to Regional Planning within five days of tonight's meeting. Regional Planning will review the SES the first Tuesday in May. At the May 18, 2023 Zoning Commission meeting, there will be a hearing and the Zoning Commission can put the SES to a vote. It will then go to the Walnut Township Trustees the second Tuesday in June for the Trustees to put to a vote. Trustee Chairman Bill Yates stated to Mike that at least this is a start for the township regulations on solar energy. Mike said that he knows there will be text amendments and/or additions to this document, but he thought it was approximately 90% complete. Mike Berry provided a copy of the SES for each zoning commission member and stated that it is also available to view on the township website.

Comments from the public:

The question was asked if there would be a public meeting where the public could express their thoughts on the solar energy regulations. Mike Berry explained the process and stated there would be several public hearings where the public can attend and express their support or opposition to the solar energy.

Sherry Pymer said she spoke to AEP who is familiar with every solar project in the State of Ohio. She spoke to him specifically about the West Cottontail project. She said that it is under the Muskingum/West Millersport #1/West Cottontail. Based on her conversation, she felt that this project was one that is “grandfathered”. Mike explained that the Trustees/zoning have no control over any projects over 49 megawatts.

Frank Martin stated that the township was going to force him to live in an Industrial zoned area if this solar energy is passed. Mike said he would have several opportunities to express his opposition to the Trustees and zoning commission.

Justin George said that the meetings were open to the public, but shouldn't that be the local public that is affected only? Mike Berry stated that the meetings are open to all of the public.

Seth Pymer asked how “they” put solar panels into rural residential and industrial without public input. Chair Pillon stated that it hasn't yet happened in our area yet. Mike Berry stated that there was a State meeting with PUCO and he said he was told that the State has the power to make these decisions. He said that all utilities are exempt from zoning.

Chair Charles Pillon stated that a lot of this is coming from the State, and that the technology has reached efficiency levels to address. He stated that at least on the township level they are trying to address the 49 megawatts and less.

Wayne Harris said he did some research and as far as efficiency levels it is 24.5% efficiency, the lowest efficiency of any power generation.

The comment was made that letters need to be sent to the county commissioners, the township trustees, petitions need to be signed to let the powers that be know that the solar energy is not wanted in this community.

Discussion from the zoning commission:

Chair Charles Pillon said that the zoning commission was going to go over the document tonight, and thought perhaps they would have additional questions/comments in the future. Vice-Chair Dick Williams asked for discussion understanding that although they would “certify” the document this evening, he wanted to note that the zoning commission acknowledge and certify the document this evening and once it is sent to Regional Planning, the zoning commission would have an opportunity for further comments.

Mike Berry stated that he felt the SES clearly defines and addresses the commercial and residential districts. He stated that a rezone to Industrial would be required for a solar energy farm. Mike then reviewed the township zoning map for the public.

Chair Charles Pillon asked for a motion to certify the proposed Solar Energy System Regulation by the Walnut Township Trustees for zoning resolution and submit to Regional Planning for their review. Motion was made by Dick Williams, second offered by Ben Patterson. Motion passed with 5 yes votes.

Roll call vote:

Williams, - Yes, Upp, - Yes, Patterson, - Yes, Groves, - Yes, Pillon, - Yes

Adjournment: Chair Charles Pillon called for a motion to adjourn at 8:04 PM. Motion was made by Ben Patterson to adjourn, second offered by Dick Williams. Motion passed with 5 yes votes.

Roll call vote:

Williams, - Yes, Upp, - Yes, Patterson, - Yes, Groves, - Yes, - Pillon, Yes

Minutes Recorded By: Patricia McLoughlin

Charles Pillon - Chair

Dick Williams – Vice Chair