

ATHENS TOWNSHIP
SPECIAL PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING
7:00 pm Athens Township Government Center
Minutes of WEDNESDAY, February 28, 2018

1. *Pledge of Allegiance*: The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.
2. *Roll Call*: The meeting was called to order at 7:00 pm by Chairman Dave Beckstrom. Members present were Dan Woodfill, Dave Henderson, Dave Beckstrom, Cindy Anderson, and Jake Carpenter. Also present was Consulting Planner, Stephen Grittmann, and applicant Andrew Dahlen.

Absent: Marlys Balfany

3. *Minutes of February 20, 2018*: A motion to approve the minutes as amended (note changes below) was made by Commissioner Carpenter, motion seconded. Motion carried unanimously on a vote of 4-0.

Add Dahlen to attendees

Section 4.a Chair Beckstrom said City of Scandia, not Sandia.

4. *Public Hearings*:

- a. Continued public hearing for SoCore Energy zoning text amendment

The Planning Commission reviewed the updates that were requested at the previous special meeting as well as Exhibit D that shows the strikethrough that compares the proposed Township ordinance to the Isanti County Ordinance.

Commissioner Henderson recommended that we go through Exhibit D for comparison.

Commissioner Henderson asked why we are not including "general provisions" from the County Ordinance.

Planner Grittmann explained that these provisions apply to the broader regulations and the County comprehensive plan.

Chair Beckstrom noted that solar energy farms definition from the County is different from the proposed ordinance.

Commissioner Henderson said he prefers the County definition of solar energy farm and would prefer the Township ordinance use this language.

Commissioner Henderson said the proposed ordinance has a conditional use and a primary use, asked what that meant.

Chair Beckstrom said that under section 2, it requires a conditional use permit to operate.

Planner Grittmann explained that solar farms would only be allowed as a principal use of a property, and a conditional use permit is required to operate.

Commissioner Woodfill asked what the setbacks would be.

Planner Grittmann stated that the proposed ordinance would have a setback of 15 feet, and a setback from residential dwellings of 200 feet.

Chair Beckstrom asked about the 200 feet and how that measured.

Planner Grittmann stated that it would be panel to building.

Chair Beckstrom asked if we could put anything in there to be more specific.

Planner Grittmann said we can clarify that it's being measured from the solar structure.

Commissioner Henderson asked about the decommissioning / abandonment plan and if the board "shall" require a bond or "may" require a bond.

Planner Grittmann said if the board were to waive a requirement, they would need to have findings as to why they're waiving this requirement. Or if you were imposing an optional requirement, the board would need to have findings as to why they are imposing it. Planner Grittmann recommended that it's easier for a board to waive an optional requirement, than to waive a requirement.

Chair Beckstrom asked for discussion on the 12-month requirement rather than the 6-month requirement for the conditional use permit to be implemented.

Chair Beckstrom stated that the proposed language does not mention what will happen if progress does not proceed after the 12-month timeframe. Chair Beckstrom stated that the County language is clearer than the proposed language.

Commissioner Henderson said he agreed.

Commissioner Henderson asked about the second ordinance amendment that proposes that all conditional use permits be granted 12-months to be implemented.

Planner Grittmann stated that the applicant has requested this ordinance amendment and that's why there's two ordinance amendment proposals. He stated that the Planning Commission should still take action on the ordinance amendment even-though the applicant's request is being satisfied with the first ordinance amendment.

Commissioner Henderson made a motion to deny the second ordinance amendment that grants all conditional use permit applicants 12-months to start their project. Motion Seconded. All members voting in favor. Motion carries on a vote of 4-0.

Commissioner Henderson made a motion to approve the ordinance amendment for solar energy farms. Motion seconded with the following changes:

- **Change the definition of Solar Energy Farm to use match the County's Ordinance.**
- **Change Section 20-34 (w)-3 to read: "A solar energy system shall maintain a distance of at least two-hundred (200) feet from the nearest panel to the nearest residential dwelling.**
- **Change Section 20-34 (w)-3 to match the County's Ordinance.**

All members voting in favor. Motion carries on a vote of 4-0.

5. *Adjournment:* Commissioner Carpenter motioned to adjourn the meeting. Motion seconded, motion passes 4-0

Chair Beckstrom closed the meeting at 7:55 p.m.

Minutes approved on this 19th day of April, 2018.



Ryan Gritman, Zoning Administrator



Dave Beckstrom, Planning Chair