

Randolph County Commissioners

July 1, 2020

The Randolph County Commissioners met in a Special meeting at 6:15 pm in the Commissioners and Council Room in the Courthouse with the following members present: Board President Michael Wickersham and Tom Chalfant. Also present was Randolph County Auditor Laura J Martin and County Attorney Meeks Cockerill.

Michael Wickersham, President presided over the meeting.

Solar Ordinance

Mike said it has almost been 3 weeks ago. We met as commissioners and had a lengthy discussion with Randy Abel, Executive Director of the Area Planning Commission and the EDRP representatives regarding the solar ordinance and we relayed as commissioners what we thought would be a fair, some fair changes to the ordinance as we read the final draft, which I believe is the finally draft but it is dated 5/6/2020 is the final draft I have. It looks like it has the changes that I felt we recommended.

Meeks stated he has a 6/15/20.

Mike said I didn't print that one. Let me see that one.

So, the first thing we discussed was the removal of adverse effects, which the copy I had I believed was removed. Page 17 & 22 we felt like, our belief there was it could be handled the way any other complaint or problem with the zoning ordinance is handled and that was through a hearing with the BZA and then to the circuit court if you don't like the way the appeal process goes. The second one we talked about, and we talked about it at lengths which is that commercial solar farms as they originally were stated in the ordinance could not go into any area, where only permitted in intensive agricultural areas, that was not permitted in limited agricultural areas or commercial area or manufacturing areas or residential areas. I believe, we didn't really vote on these and I didn't get a recommendation out of Gary, and Gary's not really here but Tom and I both believe that they should go into limited area, be allowed to go into limited areas without special exception so long as the unincorporated and incorporated towns are protected by setback. That would be staying further away from those areas with your solar farm. The idea there, the intent that I heard from Randy and correct me if I am wrong Randy, is we put them in intensive because it becomes a special exception in limited and there was a lot of comparison to the CAFO ordinance. Which created, the CAFO ordinance if you recall or I will jut share with you. We created limited agricultural and intensive agricultural for the purchase of confined feeding and limited was areas where confined feeding was not to be allowed except with special exception and intensive was where it was, it was developed that way, I believe comparing solar farms and wind turbines to CAFO's is not a fair comparison. Solar farms are not as intrusive as CAFO's so they shouldn't maintain the same setbacks and shouldn't maintain the same restrictions so we took the position that solar farms should be able to go into limited

agriculture and with appropriate screening and appropriate setbacks from unincorporated and incorporated towns.

Meeks would like to add something to this.

Meeks said I went back to my notes about the CAFO's. I talked to some people. The theory behind the limited ag and the ag was not what I had initially thought was the smell of the CAFO, it is water quality. The community went and put a circle around all of these. The state at that time didn't have water quality standards or the proper ones, I don't want to get into it. I think they have it now. It was the leaching of the hog manure into the water supply for those people. That was the reasoning not necessarily the smell. So at least that is what my notes for the CAFO's, I went to a couple of those meetings, but it's been quite a while ago.

Clyde Shaffer said I was on the committee, I am not saying that wasn't an issue, smell was the number one issue.

Meeks said that was the nuisance for the people.

Clyde said because of housing. That is why light agriculture to it.

Mike said I was President of the Area Planning Commission at that time. I would tend to agree with you. We did have a lot of CAFO's at that time. Those areas where circled and the areas around those areas where circled as intensive.

Clyde the only reason on the leaching under IDEM rules if we allow hog manure to leach into any water of the state it qualifies us to have to do a cleanup. Which requires us to clean it up instead of them.

Mike said so going back to solar. Solar again in my opinion is not as intrusive as a confined feeding operation. In some respects, it is not as intrusive as a wind farm. I think with proper screening.

Tom adds it is not as intrusive as some neighbors.

Mike said and it is not as intrusive as some neighbors, I mean it goes back to the theory if I live in limited and my neighbors wants to put a barn and fifty hogs next to my property they can do that without reservation. They can do it right on my line, the fence can be on the line and the barn can be 15 or 20 feet from my property. Yes, a solar farm is pretty massive, but it can be screened and we are trying to work on screening and develop screening. Again, I can't speak for the commissioners, because we haven't voted on it. I believe it should go into limited agricultural areas, as long as unincorporated and incorporated towns are protected with a setback. I am not sure we have developed that setback yet.

Randy Abel said he hasn't seen one.

Mike said that is the second thing we talked about.

Then the third thing we got into was the requirement that the ordinance that required the ordinance that requires the 220 set back from any property with a residential use. That included the buffer zone. Again, I believed and I think Commissioner Chalfant agreed with me that 220 set back from a residential use was too great. To restrict any development of a solar farm in the county. Again, I think we as commissioners we have embraced alternative energy through our wind farms and solar farms. I think it's, the windfarm, has shown to be a benefit to the county. Both financially for farmers and farmer's neighbors for our roads and for our deposits. They paid us handsomely to come in. I know there are people out there that don't like them, and there is always going to be people that don't like them. I don't think they've affected the property values in the counties. I don't know that for a fact. I have hopes that solar farms would be of the same nature. They would be a benefit to the county. Benefit to the landowners and would not affect property values. I have talked to realtors in the county and they would tell you there is probably a short-term effect of property value decline will affect with any change in the area of the county. Once that change is in place and time passes those property values bounce back to where they were before that time. If you add in the fact that they are living in an area where the roads are much improved, the property value may very well go up. I think going back to the setback we proposed, and I think this is a point of confusion. We proposed that in the applications process the developer based upon there solar farm will either setback from a home 400 feet with no screening required or setback from the property line 40 feet with screening required or see a less than 40 foot, we said 20-foot setback, from a property line if they got the homeowner's waiver to do so. That waiver would have the conditions that the homeowner and the developer would agree to. That goes back to the application process when I apply for a commercial solar permit. I'm going to tell you at this time I am going to be 40 feet from Bob Smith's property line and I am going to screen it this way and if it meets that standard of screening and meets that 40-foot setback from the property line, I would be of the opinion that the developer in the permit would be approved. The fourth item we talked about was changing the burial depth within the fence from 60 inches to 48 inches. I didn't think there was any issue with that from Randy that morning. The other part of that was meeting the electric standard. Then we got into the public road setback. My notes I believe say we were setting back 60 feet from the public road, am I correct in that.

Tom said it is to the panels.

Mike said 60 feet to the panels, from the edge of the right-of-way. That could be instead of 100 from the center of the right-of-way, I don't know if that is the edge or not, from the edge of the right-of-way. We recommend a change there as well. The perimeter roads we agreed that a grass, a maintain grass road around the perimeter of the solar farm would be adequate for ambulance and emergency vehicles to drive over. If it was maintained in grass then that would be enough, and removing the paving and gravel. Then we had a long discussion regarding the definition of a visual barrier and opacity and density. There was some conclusion you agreed to what the finding is what is density is to make sure we have the proper screening.

Randy said the question is what the density is. I have several people here tonight to discuss that.

Mike said correct me if I'm wrong Meeks that is all we went through that morning.

Meeks said I think there are 2 things that come up since then. That is some sort of guaranty property value guaranty that from, you guys would want to speak to and think about that so the community can hear your thoughts. That is probably a good idea.

Mike said I think it is an undue burden on the developer to guaranty somebody's property value. I can go out in the county and buy any property; any property I buy I can put something on there that would have just as detrimental or more detrimental or just as good or positive effect on the neighbor's property as a solar farm would. I don't have to guaranty property value.

Randy said not if it is permitted use you don't have to have a hearing then. You can put anything you want on there. We are talking about the water scale 15 or 14-hundred-acre development that has to have permitting done.

Mike said right

Randy said that is a big difference.

Mike said it's only a big difference if go in with the premises that it's going to have a negative effect.

Randy said if there is no effect then there is no cost to them other than the \$500 appraisal.

Mike said there is an unknown cost there, the unknown cost is the unknown. What that appraisal is going to be.

Randy said and what the cost to the BZA.

Mike said what is the property owner's appraisal gone to be. So, it is an uncertainty in the process that has a chilling effect on the development. It's uncertainty. I invest all this time and I invest all this money to develop this solar farm and then it all boils down to me negotiating with a neighbor that his property is not going to be, his property value is not going to be reduced. We don't require anybody else to do that in the county for any development. For me as I have been told by realtors any change is going to have somewhat, could have somewhat of a negative effect on surrounding properties, any change at the time of the change. Once the change is made and the development or the change is there than anybody moving into that area is going to move in with accepting the change.

Randy asked so if we have a factory that moves in such as the ethanol plant. It has a special exception hearing every single time. Any time you move anything into a district that is not typical for that use it has a hearing. The homeowners have an option to come in and discuss the development. As I have said in past meetings, Randolph County has the only ordinance that I know of in the country. In the whole country it does not require a hearing every time you place something in ag or ag limited such as wind farms, solar farms. A factory you would have to have a hearing for zoning change. So, I don't think it is unreasonable to ask for special protections for the public of Randolph County. You are talking about \$15,000 dollars, so if there

are 3 homes you are talking about a \$30,000-dollar appraisal fee for an investor who is investing \$240 million dollars. I don't know what percent that is but it is miniscule. If that is believed that our setbacks are adequate and believe that our screening and set backs are adequate and waivers are adequate then there should be absolutely no property value and no further effect on upon that company's investments.

Mike said so if we have a 220-foot setback we wouldn't be worried about the property value declining.

Randy said I would be worried no matter what it was.

Mike said it wasn't in there before I guess that is why.

Randy said I guess the issue came up later in time. Other people discussing that.

Mike said I think it came up when we shrunk the setback.

Randy said yes especially then, yes.

Mike said I guess the way I look at it is, if we let the 220 alone we wouldn't be arguing about property values, because of the screening and setback.

Randy said I'm not sure that is true.

Mike said I'm not either it sure looks that way.

Andy Fahl said the discussion of the committee was and I think the unknown is we don't know how this is going to affect property values. Because it has been well document that they are the leader in the state. I think this is a new industry coming to the county and there is a lot of unknowns. So, I think the discussion of the solar committee was just this is a possibility to protect that resident in the county if they want to put the \$500 dollars out for appraisal, it's just a low-cost way to protect themselves, because we don't know how this is going to affect us.

Mike stated regardless of the setback.

Andy said exactly. We talked about CAFO's and we have talked about wind. We probably dodged or came through ok unscathed on property values, we think. We can't find any information anywhere and we have looked to see how this solar farm will affect all of these residential properties. So, it is a huge unknown in discussion of the committee. So that is where we are coming from. I don't know that we are 100% sold on this, it's more of something we are looking into and a recommendation. I think the research is coming from Kosciusko County it is coming from an Indiana County. So maybe it was not timely in our discussion, but it is something we have discussed.

Mike asked if this is Kosciusko County's language.

Andy said no.

Randy said Kosciusko County was much more restrictive than ours was. We decided, they wanted the solar company to pay for all of it and our decision was we want to see the landowner have some skin in the game.

Mike said as far as the language itself you mention it.

Randy said close to it.

Mike said ok. That is what it is adapted from?

Randy said pretty much. I mean the language.

Mike asked if they have any solar farms up there.

Randy said I think they have one coming in I'm not sure. I really don't know for sure.

Mike says he understands and appreciate the thought of that. The difficulty I have with that is the process.

Andy said the committee had a long discussion about bringing a new industry into the county and the current resident. We are trying to put those two together to live and work together. That has been our goal. So, if we have a resident that comes forward and says hey you have ruined me. This is possibly an option where, if they are that diligent about it that they could protect themselves.

Mike asked Tom if he had any thoughts on this.

Tom said I have considered it and I don't believe it is necessary. I think somehow were treating Ag limited as residential. Ag limited is agriculture. People move out there they understand the risks in an agriculture community there is going to be the kind of activities going on and solar is going to be less intrusive than most agriculture processes. If you are concerned about that then don't build in an Ag limited. Don't buy a home there. Go where the infrastructure is. Don't create new problems, try to direct people to go where there is infrastructure, so we don't have to build new services in the rural areas for water and sewers. We don't have good sewers in the rural areas, we don't need to encourage people building more homes in Ag limited if they are not going to build their own services. I mean I think we are trying to make this a residential area.

Randy said if you look up other ordinances, zoning ordinance and developmental ordinance they all have a protective zone around the city for expansion of the cities. I think they have, they may not call it Ag limited but they do call it Ag something.

Mike said AR.

Randy said AR is technically a sub-division area that's agriculture. They set those places aside for expansion, for factories that need that infrastructure that close to a town. Per sub-divisions that also need the infrastructure that close to town. They all set out this mile or whatever it is the distance from town. Now, yeah you call it Ag limited and you did it during the CAFO's hearings. Almost every ordinance you look at in the state has a very exact same zoning district that surrounds the city protecting a more densely populated area and one that is potentially gone be your area for expansion. So, if you fill it up with things that don't, aren't compatible with expansion of residential and factory and commercial, then where does that go. The idea is you want to keep it all centralize near city. Of course, the city got a big interest in that because then they can start annexing.

Mike said sure. I don't think anybody is arguing that Randy.

Randy said no. That is why we have that Ag limited of protected area.

Tom said Ag limited is not just areas around cities and towns and unincorporated. It's a lot of areas, just about every highway is Ag limited. Where there is a lot of homes are Ag limited. We got protection around.

Randy said if you look at the comprehensive plan of Randolph County and the areas they recommend for expansion. You will see that those areas that are protected by Ag limited already are what our comprehensive plan has pointed out and zeroed in to say these are the areas of expansion. So that is why that Ag limited, yes goes down highways, goes down a lot of other areas. You will find that these areas are high populated areas, close to cities, some are not, and some are campgrounds and stuff. So, you have places like Camp Modoc where there are several hundreds, and he has put like 75 brand new camp sites. Made an investment in a sewer system and I am assuming that connects to Modoc's system. He has put in a brand-new sewer system, a lot of investment there. So yes, he expects those areas to be protected that is why he is Ag limited. There are other campgrounds the same way. Now campgrounds are not exactly high density residential.

Mike said I don't think a campground is going to have, I don't think a solar farm next to a campground is going to have a negative affect if it is screen properly.

Randy said so once again we go back to we don't know. I have seen no research that says one way or another on those. It is the unknown. That is the whole problem with this whole thing. We don't know, so if you don't know I would say take extra precautions to protect the county.

Mike said going back to what you just said Ag limited around unincorporated towns and incorporated towns are going to be protected. If the setback is put in. So, what the ordinance would be allowing is that you are allowed to put this farm in a limited agricultural area, but you can't put it with in so many feet of an incorporated or unincorporated city.

Randy said it still does not protect the future developmental sites. That is what Ag limited does it protects the whole area for expansion. So, you could say from a home, but an expansion of

what. The homeowner right next door he may want to expand a mobile home park, he may want to put in a sub division and now you got solar setting on it where is he going to go.

Mike said he doesn't have solar setting next to him if you set it back far enough you don't have solar there.

Randy said we don't know what to set it back from. Your saying set it back from the existing house.

Mike said I am saying set it back from the limit of the city or town.

Randy said so you are setting it back from the city limits.

Mike said yes.

Randy said that is what Ag limited does. It sets it back.

Mike said but it is not all the limited area. That is what we are saying.

Ed Thornburg said unincorporated towns do not have city limits.

Randy said that's another problem

Mike said you set it back from the center.

Ed said you can set it back from the center or set it back from the original town plat possibly, that could be an answer.

Mike said what my point is once you set it back it, you still have a whole bunch of Ag limited in the county that they can develop on. If there allowed to develop on it.

Randy said I guess the whole point of the committee was that is why we wanted to have a special exception hearing. Because there are places that are absolutely appropriate for solar in Ag limited, some are not. I think that decision needs to be an open discussion with a plan put before the BZA and say this is appropriate or this is not appropriate. That allows the people living in those areas, allows the mayors to come forward, allows any developer who says I bought this property I want to develop this into sub-divisions, it gives all those people the options to come and be heard in a special exception hearing. That is why we have those areas indicated in the ordinance, Ag limited, manufacturing, residential, all those other areas except for Ag insensitive we had listed for special exception hearing. Because we do believe those areas even in commercial and manufacturing that would be absolutely appropriate for solar. You can't sit here and right a 40 page or 20 page or 10-page ordinance like I have seen in some counties and all those ordinances require a hearing. That is how they make them shorter. How do you tell a guy who has invested in land who says he going to put a sub-division in here and Max Helms bought some land and says I going to put one in. Obviously, he didn't now.

Tom said so put it in.

Randy said so the problem is now you put solar next to him, have you affected his land value and you affected his ability to put this in.

Tom said how far are you going to look into the future, how far are you going to predict somebody wants to develop 10 years.

Randy said that is why you have special exception hearing. The ordinance is taken to the BZA and they rational that way.

Mike said for me that starts with premise although use is solar farms an agricultural use.

Randy said I think they are industrial use, I don't think they are an agricultural use.

Meeks said I think it is agriculture, I don't see how you could say it's an industrial use. When you don't enforce it in industrial parks.

Randy said it sounds like some counties do that, they actually rezone it. To be in its own district.

Meeks said what the commissioner said is exactly what it is, you are taking sunlight and converting in to energy. That is what corn does, that is what wheat does.

Randy said if you look at who regulates solar, it's not the USDA, and it's the utility commission. So, I don't think anybody views this as an agricultural use. You can't plant a seed and get a solar panel. That is just my opinion. I think it is a hard sale to saying that's agriculture. Neither here nor there has it regulated in this ordinance.

Mike said it starts with the premise of how you want to regulate it. Do you want to regulate as a CAFO, or do you want to regulate it as a solar farm that is passive? But offers no odor, very little noise and is not vertically obstructive or is it. To me that is how I look at it. It's not, I start with the premise that to me it is not invasive so it doesn't have a negative effect on the property around it.

Andy said so what is the commissioner's opinion on the system that we have had in place forever. With the hearing and BZA and the variance.

Mike asked for?

Andy said for special exception. Why can't we just travel the path that we have traveled for years?

Mike said and treat limited like commercial.

Andy said with a special exception of a BZA hearing. That is tried and true.

Mike said my only and again it goes back to Ag Limited is for agriculture use. I really consider this to be agriculture use. I don't think it needs a special exception hearing. I guess it's nothing that I do dislike the process. I think and I don't know where this farm is going, other than he mentioned the other day that he was going to be close to Huntsville. That is the only thing I know about that.

Randy said I will make the added point.

Mike said I don't know if that is part or if it goes intensive limited intensive limited, intensive limited intensive limited so if limited is in the middle of it then and it's a very small part of it, it may end the whole process because it goes into limited agriculture that emotion comes in and changes that. That's some of the negative of development is that you have the emotion that is presented at the hearing and that becomes a BZA emotional decision-making process. You lose facts. I will point to the wind farm, if wind farm was special exception we wouldn't have a wind farm today. We would be just like Henry County and be just like Wayne County, we would be just like Delaware County. I truly believe that. I think one of our things that we are neglecting here, and not looking at is the property owner that is going to benefit from the solar farm. That property owner that wants to lease his property to the solar company and make that money off of it. A lot of farmers in the community and county did that off the wind farm and I think they would have not had that opportunity if it would have been a BZA. I think we wouldn't have had CAFO's if it would have been a BZA if it had gone to the BZA. The reason is because people don't like change, it's pretty tough to set up there as a member of 7 and you have a room full of emotion that's telling you what they want and what I want and it's pretty tough to make a logical decision based upon the facts. Special exception has its place, but when you come to broad base development that reaches out to all parts of the county I think the less of that the better would be my opinion of that. I can speak from experience when Tony Goldstein came to town way back when, I came to the commissioner's meetings and him drinking the jar of manure water. I kept saying to myself, just make it a BZA hearing that's all you got to do. I was on the area planning commission at that time. I was president of the area planning commission, it's simple just make it a BZA hearing. The more I set through those meetings I realized that facts were going out the window and emotion has taken over. That is when we decided it couldn't be a BZA hearing.

Randy said we have had in the past some emotion involved. We require sheets to be filled out now. There are 5-7 criteria, each member has to check off his criteria and his reason for the criteria. If they are not based on facts those can be appealed to the court and sent right back again. They have to be based on facts now. We have to have it signed and you have to put your name on it, emotion, and if you are one that is susceptible to hearing emotional statements you don't have any business being on the BZA. You have to be somebody that can be able to sort facts out from emotions.

Meeks has one more thing. I said two things.

Mike said I'm sorry did I interrupt you and cut you off.

Meeks said I talked to the EDPR attorney before I came. I think they have an issue with concept, I wasn't at the committee meeting or whatever meeting you guys had before, about everybody

has to sign a waiver to not have a hearing or something. I am not exactly sure, what it was you guys would know better. I'm just telling you.

Randy said that was in the area planning meeting.

Meeks said I think they would take exception to that because they think then, one person could literally hold up everything and kind of take them hostage.

Tom replied like what's happening are now.

Randy said it would go to special exception.

Meeks said I just saying that with everything.

Mike said I am not sure what you are talking about.

Meeks said maybe Randy can tell you. Meeks said I'm not really sure either. Randy continued area planning came up with an option if you didn't want to have a special exception hearing go to the landowners that were affected around that Ag limited area and get a waiver signed that you were ok with them being how every many feet away it was. You could sign that waiver, you get however many people are affected and you get 100% of them to sign it and then you don't have to go through the special exception hearing.

Meeks said I think the 100% is what they have issue with, because one person could literally hold that hostage. That I what they told me. I just wanted let the committee know that and you guys to know that. When you are discussing things. I am a bit sympathetic to it but you know we do a lot of things in the law if you get 51% landowners then you are going to have to have ditch, right Ed.

Ed stated you can actually have a ditch, but the board could still vote it down.

Meeks said well yeah, but you know we don't allow 100% on very many things. I don't know if they would be willing to say that 51% can send it. I didn't get into that discussion. That is something you guys can discuss.

Mike said so if you had 100% I mean typically a lot of people if they will get a variance they will go out and get the property owners consent to the variance before the hearing. They will present those at the hearing to make their case for the variance. It would be similar type action.

Randy asked Meeks if that was his second thing.

Meeks said that is my only one. I'm done. I already said the first one earlier.

Mike said I wish that Gary was here.

Meeks asked should we adjourn.

Mike asked Randy if he had anything else for us at this time.

Randy said I don't think at this time.

Mike asked if anyone in the audience want to share a thought, opinion or a question regarding the process zoning ordinance. Yes, sir if you would come forward we can pick you up on tape. I got your name earlier but I thought you were with the Edit meeting. So, I will have to get your name again.

My name is Jim Schowe, 9501 S 1000 W, Losantville. I am a new resident to the county and I think this county is really worthwhile that is why I am investing a lot of my money. I support wind, the solar farm 100%. The only thing I am asking is, just 3 blocks east of here is Mrs. Wicks Pies. They need 65% of their raw product is dependent on pollinators, bees and so on. We need to put something in the law about adding wildflowers and natural forbs to the solar farm. That not only supports Mrs. Wicks but it gives us a base that the local bee keepers can grow and get another product going on. Like I said I do support this 100% we have to be careful on the screens and buffers to make sure we don't put Asian Honeysuckle which would be really a great wall except it's so evasive or Autumn Olive I am still doing a lot of work trying to get rid of it on my property, so if the council could consider that I would appreciate it mostly. I am not the kind of person just to shoot my mouth off I don't \$500 towards buying seeds for wildflowers if that is what it takes. I not a rich person, like I said I live in this county and think it is a good place to live.

Mike said would you be if it were next to you, would you prefer wildflowers and something as a buffer strip as opposed to screening.

Jim said oh no no no. That is including with the screening.

Mike said an addition to the screening.

Jim said yeah.

Mike asked what are the product you talked about that was invasive.

Jim said there is a whole list. Hey Randy help me out. The federal highway department came through a couple years ago and this Autumn Olive is wonderful. We plant it along the roadways we don't have to worry about erosion, we don't have to worry, we have a good wind screen, and we don't have to worry about snow piling into the road so we don't have to plow them out so much. It is one of the most invasive plants you can see. I mean it is nasty, it has thorns on it, and it's hard to get rid of. This is all done in the right state of mind, it was something that was needed and we wanted and we just didn't go far enough.

Tom said you mean to tell me that there is unintended consequences to good intentions.

Mike said would it be fair to say the solar developer needs to put in native ground covers and shrubs.

Jim said they have already committed to that. I am talking about wildflowers something for pollinators.

Mike said yeah, I think it was quoted in the paper saying that might be too expensive.

Jim said what will happen if we don't have any more bees. What is going to happen to the rest of our fruits?

Tom said clover is not expensive.

Mike said we are going to be in trouble.

Jim said a little bit of expense now might payoff some great deal in the future.

Randy said I do have a letter from Jesse who is the director of the Hoosier Environmental. He did send me a couple e-mails today.

Meeks said forward it to me.

Randy said he was basically stating, I think he is just stating it won't be that much more expensive like putting in lagoons of clover.

Jim said if they don't plant wildflowers they will have to mow the grass. That would reduce some of the maintenance they would have.

Mike said he wasn't opposed to them I just don't think, I remember the conversation.

Meeks said I was told they could use livestock grazing.

Mike said I guess I should restate the article. The article in the paper said he thought that would be a good idea, he just didn't have the authority to commit to that to the newspaper at that time. That is an opportunity.

Jim said like a said I am a new resident and would like to get to know everybody in the county.

Mike said welcome.

Jim said if you need somebody to a committee something like that please give me a call. Would be glad to help.

Mike asked what your phone number is Jim or do you want to share that. I will give you my card and you can e-mail me. Then I will have your contact information.

Tom said you signed up for something you just don't know it yet.

Mike asked if anybody else have anything to share.

Amy Alka has information about pollinators.

Mike said would this be better for the solar committee or the commissioners.

Amy said I don't know. I just have information on establishment guides for maintenance pollinator friendly.

Tom said it should probably to the solar committee.

Mike agreed. I just showed my expertise a while ago so that not going very far.

Amy said I have all kinds of information.

Mike said that should probably go to the solar committee.

Greg Beumer said just for that commissioner meeting minutes. I am Greg Beumer, I am a member of the solar committee. I had to leave earlier before we ended out last meeting and apparently it was at that meeting that we talked about the guarantee property values. I would just like to express that I would be against that concept.

Mike said ok. You guys are going to meet when we are done.

Greg said I wanted that in there.

Clyde Shaffer, from the Albany area. We had signed up for solar farms I'm bias ok. Going back to it is different than we build hog barns. Solar is the way to bring back the next generation cause it value adds to the property of land we have. As a rural farmer, I would be much more concern about a hog farm being built close to me, which Tom is almost my closes resident to 6000 head of hogs. My point is I don't think that we want to be, I think we want to be protective of our citizens and I know when you talk about getting 100% of people to agree. You want to go to a meeting like you said Randy where people shouldn't be emotional. I spoke to people about doing a wind farm in Delaware and Randolph County and we literally got slaughtered in a meeting by county council. They were dead set against it. We had people come in and were testifying about the fact the blades fall off, it could fly over a mile away. We talked about migraine headaches from the vibration and the ground, piles of dead birds under, and it finally got killed. That project would have benefited Wapahani Schools & Delta school district. It would have brought in a little over a million dollars each year per each school system. They got defeated because fear set in and like Mike said, nobody wanted to be the person to stand up to the emotions of people. They go eat breakfast with them or they have to live next to them. I am one of these, we would not have our hog facility if we had to go to a popular vote. We would lose every time. That is just not right, the other thing you talk about development in light agriculture areas. I agree with Tom, you know it is frustrating is someone that lives in

agriculture zone that wanted to come to an agriculture area and build. We want Ag to grow we get told oh no we can't do that, we are here now. Well, that is frustrating, I am not say it is done by intent or intention but it happens. At some point we have to have space to go with every evolving agriculture. Mike made a good comment, solar is a whole lot less evasive than wind. You have a wind farm 5 miles from you and you still got to look at the wind towers whether you like them or you don't. Solar is fairly close to the ground and you screen them you will have to look to find them. Also, too, when you talk about property values I was setting down her with Claudia. I use what is called approval and there has been studies on the impact of solar on property values and had 4 studies that jump up.

Randy said it's probably the same person doing them to.

Clyde said one was IC the other was the University of Illinois and McClain County. They were doing one for solar project there. I forwarded the email to the 2 commissioners while I am setting there. What I hear that there aren't studies that just comes back to someone who is against solar.

Randy said they are studies but they are not on 1400 acres are they. They are like 10 or 70 or 100.

Clyde said this are commercial so I assume commercial are more than 10 acres.

Randy said no. If you go to the ordinances you will see most of them describe commercial.

Clyde said, Randy I understand, I know you are adamant against these projects.

Randy said no I am not

NON-AUDIBLE

Mike said I understand what you are saying and there plenty to get done.

Clyde said you know we need the committee for the solar really need to dig into this stuff. Is it going to an economic value not just for the farmer but the taxpayer also for the school districts? You can look and see what solar is doing for Lynn and Union is pretty massive.

Mike said wind.

Clyde said wind, I sorry wind. Solar is going to do the same thing for us. It is defiantly not as intrusive to neighborhoods as my hog barns. That is from a hog farmer. So that is my two cents.

Mike said thanks Clyde

Clyde replied appreciate it.

Mike asked if anyone else?

Ed Dunham, I have lived in the county for 55 years. I am not against solar farms at all. But I am against that little guy that is going to take the brunt of this thing. You got a large company; foreign country wants to come to Randolph County and use our facility our product to put their business in which is the solar farm. They want to use land, that's great. It is going to be good for the farmer you know. They cannot farm land and make what they are going to make, what they are going to make off this solar farm. There is no way. The problem is you have a farm who has 100 acres 200 or 500 acres he can control about what that is going to be from his residence. I will lease you that 80 acres down at the end of the road, but I won't lease you the 80 acres near my residence. In that 80 acres there is a little guy with an acre or two that it will surround. He has no say in this, he didn't tell them to come here. He has been there 5, 10 or 50 years living in that. He gets to look out over a bean field or corn field 3 or 4 months a year and open space the rest of the time. Now he is going to look out over that solar field that is 12 or 15 or 10 feet high. You take him setting there in that 80 acres along the edge of the road his space is little. You start putting stuff around that close to him it's going to get littler. That guy, the individual has got to be protected. Now you talk about land values going down I worked this county for many years. They won't go down; the land value needs to be protected. Tom you said this was a farm, it is not a farm deal, what you plant corn 3 or 4 months going to harvest it the same with beans, hogs they go to market, cows they go to market. This is going to set there for 20 or 30 years. You plant corn it comes up 3-4 months it's gone. This guy or individual or whoever has property out there is going to set there and look a solar panel now for 20 years instead of an open field of corn or beans. You know if property comes for sale after this solar farm gets in, I have a choice I don't have to buy that build my house there, but if my house is already there and comes in I have no choice. I am caught in a trap. I think old people got to be protected. I don't know how many that includes around there, but you take 1400 acres it is going to include quite a few people. That individual didn't ask for a foreign company come in here and use our resources. County officials has approved it, which is alright. We don't have much going for this county. The people that are going to gain on this thing is the solar people and the farmer. I don't blame the farmer its good money. You can't make that kind of money farming. No way. The guy that is going to get hurt or individual is the one that is setting down there in the middle that had no control over nothing and didn't ask for this. It's is a business it is not a farm. Thank You

Mike said thank you Ed.

Mike asked anyone else. Yes Jim

Jim Wallace, Winchester. I agree with Randy Abel on his mind set on this situation, because a project of this size what's the need of rushing into it and getting everything started. What is the hurry? I think everybody in the county should be able to be heard on this. Like Randy said if it takes a lot of meetings or whatever that should be how it is. This is an invasion of the people in the county. People don't have no say about this. This is you guys idea, we don't know nothing until after the fact. Which is the same thing that happen on the turbines. It's a done deal before the people could even speak. So, I am totally against rushing into this enormous project that is going to cost millions of dollars just because you want to get it over with and get it going and get revenue coming in. This is about what's for the people best for the community, not what is best for the leaders of the community. This is for the people. That's all I got.

Mike said thank you Jim. Anyone else. Hearing none I think unless Tom if you want to continue, I think we move to adjourn the commissioners meeting. Let the committee have their meeting and see where we go to from there.

Mike moved to adjourn the meeting. Tom seconded. All aye votes cast. Motion carried.

Reviewed and signed this 8 day of September, 2020.

RANDOLPH COUNTY COMMISSIONERS







ATTEST: 

Laura J Martin Auditor of Randolph County