

BRIDGEWATER TOWNSHIP  
PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING  
MONDAY 7 PM September 20, 2021  
BRIDGEWATER TOWNSHIP HALL  
10990 CLINTON RD.

MINUTES

- I. CALL TO ORDER – Meeting called to order at 7:12 PM
- II. ROLL CALL AND DETERMINATION OF A QUORUM – Present: Horney  
Messing (remote, in Bridgewater), Barbu, Oliver. Iwanicki absent. Quorum present.
- III. REVIEW AND APPROVE AGENDA – Moved Oliver, second Horney.  
Approved by unanimous voice vote.
- IV. APPROVAL OF MINUTES – Moved by Horney to amend minutes by adding Hauck  
letter received before August meeting in reference to the solar farm public hearing  
and approve amended minutes, second Oliver. Approved by unanimous voice  
vote.
  - A. August 16, 2021 Planning Commission meeting
- V. CITIZEN PARTICIPATION – Karen and Douglas Sherman asked that their letter about  
the solar ordinance be included in the minutes - (were included in the August meeting  
minutes).
- VI. PUBLIC HEARINGS - none
- VII. OLD BUSINESS -  
Follow up on solar, wind and hamlet ordinances.  
Ordinance 67-5, to change the township ordinance to allow only private, not  
commercial scale, wind energy installations was discussed. Mr. Nanney said that a  
citizen had asked if a farmer could install a large turbine and then sell electricity to  
DTE, etc. He noted that this would not be commercially viable because a farm  
gets only one turbine, not matter how large the farm, and the height is restricted to  
100 - 200 ft, much smaller than a commercial turbine.

Oliver moved to recommend adoption of ordinance 67-5, concerning wind energy installations. Horney seconded. Roll call vote: Horney, yes; Barbu, yes; Oliver, yes; Messing, yes. Recommendation approved.

Ordinance 67-6, concerning the Hamlet commercial district was discussed. This is an amendment to eliminate the commercial district along Michigan Ave and fold those activities into the Bridgewater Hamlet commercial zoning district to align with the current Master Plan.

Horney moved to recommend adoption of Ordinance 67-6, Messing seconded.

Roll call vote: Horney, yes; Barbu, yes; Oliver, yes; Messing, yes.

Recommendation approved.

Ordinance 67-7, to allow commercial scale solar energy installations in the township was discussed. Horney noted that the final responsibility was with the Board of Trustees. He acknowledged receipt of the table of potential payments to landowners from the Shermans but said that we have no information on that and it is probably not relevant to the discussion. He reported that the question raised at the public hearing about hunting near an installation would only be an issue if the buildings were occupied, that the hunting restrictions would not apply to the panels, per the DNR. An Invenergy representative said they might have an operations building as part of an installation that would be occupied. Mr Nanney pointed out that such a building is not allowed in the Ag district so such a building would have to go in the commercial district in the hamlet. A question was raised about a bond to insure removal of the solar installation at the end of its life. Mr. Nanney said that we could ask for a cash bond, an unusual step but allowable. We could also ask for a bond guaranteed by someone other than the company doing the solar installation so the company doing the installation could not declare bankruptcy and walk away. It was noted that utilities are not currently exempt from personal property taxes so selling the facility to DTE wouldn't rule out personal property taxes. A bill has been introduced in the Michigan legislature to exempt commercial solar installations from personal property tax.

There was extended discussion on the pros and cons of an ordinance to allow commercial solar installations in the township. The planning commissioners identified all of the following findings of fact and conclusions as relevant to any decision on the proposed solar energy facility ordinance amendments:

Pros:

1. Would generate revenue to property owners.
2. May generate some tax revenue to the township.
3. Would generate renewable energy.
4. Would bring some economic stimulus to the township.
5. The township has flat land and electrical transmission corridors that make it attractive for these facilities.
6. It may be better to stay ahead of state government pre-emption to influence how these facilities are developed but state pre-emption is probably inevitable.

Cons:

1. The public hearing comments suggest that the citizens are generally opposed to commercial solar installations in the township.
2. Most purchases for the construction of an installation, and the workforce to build it, would come from outside the township.
3. There are concerns about the appearance of a facility and the wear and tear on the infrastructure from construction and maintenance.
4. There are concerns about having resources for decommissioning decades from now.
5. There are concerns about the project life - once constructed it will essentially exist indefinitely. A project would require a Special Land Use permit which does not expire and stays with the land
6. There are concerns about our ability to conduct ongoing inspections to verify ground cover, safety and site conditions.
7. With no comparable installation nearby we are the blind guys trying to describe an elephant by touch only.

8. There are concerns about impacts of industrial scale battery storage on-site with respect to fire hazards.
9. The claim to preserve farmland with solar installations is a fallacy - the land on a commercial solar site cannot be farmed. If looking to preserve farmland, solar will not do that.
10. Commercial solar in the township will benefit greatly a very small number of landowners with no benefit or a detriment to everyone else.
11. This is essentially forever, not for a limited period of time. Once done there is no going back.
12. It is not consistent with our efforts to preserve farmland. There are better places with vacant ground not in active farming. We should not convert our best yielding farmland to grow solar panels.
13. Neither wind nor solar have positive cash flows without big government subsidies.
14. The power generated will go to the network with no local benefit to our electrical distribution network.
15. Most jobs generated are transitory and not permanent.
16. Some property owners want these facilities well outside the areas we have identified.
17. There are concerns about the stability of any tax revenues.
18. There are concerns about the installation company wanting to do mass grading of sites.
19. We are at the leading edge of this technology in Michigan - should not be the guinea pig.
20. Chemical and mechanical processes to manufacture and recycle solar panels are hazardous and of serious concern from an environmental toxicity perspective. Solar panels under development use materials more toxic than the current silicon panels.

Horney moved to postpone a vote on the recommendation for ordinance 67-7 to the next meeting, October 11. Messing second. Approved by unanimous voice vote.

## VIII. NEW BUSINESS

### A. Rustic Glen minor site plan approval

The application is for construction of pole barn structure on the property. Mr. Nanney explained that the application meets all of the requirements and, if it were an agricultural property, would require only administrative approval. A commercial property requires Planning Commission approval. Oliver motion to approve the minor site plan, Barbu second. Roll call vote: Horney, yes; Barbu, yes; Oliver, yes; Messing, yes. Minor site plan approved.

## IX. COMMUNICATIONS

### A. Zoning Administrators Report on file

Mr. Nanney reported a problem with an inherited property that could not be made legal as it was. Changes were made to correct the problem.

### B. Trustees Report - None

X. INFORMATIONAL ITEMS – Mr. Nanney reported that, next month, there is a remote conference by the MI Association of Planning that is very good. The Planning Commission has funds for registration. Go to: [planningMI.org](http://planningMI.org)

## XI. PUBLIC COMMENT -

Mary Kratz, 13435 US-12, submitted a letter (see Appendix) to include parcels in sections 34 & 35 and spoke in favor commercial panels. She said they were an economic development opportunity.

Jane Fox of Invenergy thanked the Commission for our time and consideration and urged the Commission to consider property owners requests. She said that construction of a facility would be by a specialty firm and once operational would not change much.

We also received an email note from Dan McQueer.

XII ADJOURNMENT – Moved to adjourn Horney, support Oliver. Meeting adjourned at 9:35 PM by unanimous voice vote.

Next meeting is November 15, 2021.

## APPENDIX

**Dan Kaffee** <kaffeedan@yahoo.com>

**To: Rodney Nanney, Geoffrey Oliver, Mark Iwanicki, Dave Horney, Calvin Messing and 1 more...**

**Cc: Bridge Water, Laurie Fromhart**

Fri, Sep 17 at 3:56 PM

Board members,

To follow up on the August 16, 2021 meeting and sorry for the delay, I still have concerns for the solar zoning ordinance amendments. I spoke of the preventive maintenance issues during my time allotted at the meeting, but after a review of my notes, I may have not covered all relevant concerns. As follows;

- 1) Warranty issues- who is responsible for replacement and clean-up?
- 2) Sustainable practice- where are the acres being replaced for the agriculture in order to feed the growing population?
- 3) System failure- who, what, when, why, and how?
- 4) Numbers- what is the addition to the tax roll and will the township residents receive a tax reduction incentive for allowing the solar farm ordinance?
- 5) Infrastructure- are the additional infrastructure costs for traffic, stone/brine, etc., included with the proposed contract and included as such?
- 6) Electricity- are the residents getting a discounted rate? And what grid enhancements are expected to ensure citizens of no power outages with the advanced system?

Finally, with miles of ITC easements within the township, ITC already conducts annual maintenance to establish a "clear" selection of where the solar panels should be installed and maintained. This would not burden the residents with any additional site sores or infrastructure logistics. This is common sense for the company and the residents who we represent.

Thank you,

Dan McQueer  
Resident/26 years



September 20, 2021

Dear Bridgewater Township Planning Board Members,

Nationwide, solar energy use and development is growing as governments and private companies commit to using 100% renewable energy. Support for renewable energy is at an all-time high, but opposition to solar development has intensified. While officials push back on solar developers, the landowners and farmers who participate in these projects have largely been ignored.

We are the landowners of the proposed Bridgewater solar project in Bridgewater Township, and we urge you, our Township leaders, to move forward with the upcoming Bridgewater solar ordinance and incorporate the following items within the amendment. Most of the participating landowners live in Sections 25, 26, 27, 34, 35, and 36. We ask that you allow these sections to be included as permissible to host commercial solar. You would be unfairly excluding us and many other landowners who want to participate by leaving these sections out of the amendment. We also suggest allowing grading for solar arrays in these areas. Grading is necessary for commercial scale solar to allow the panels to be able to rotate and follow the sun. Grading is a commonly used practice for homes, roads, etc., why shouldn't it be allowed for solar if it won't disrupt the overall drainage patterns?

Solar projects can transform the communities where they are built. The projects provide economic relief for both the participating landowners and the township, while producing clean, green energy. But as participating landowners, these solar projects will also help protect our land for future generations. Solar projects provide many of us with a more stable income, help us plan for retirement, and provide a service to the community. This additional income would be a blessing to our small community of farmers and would be spent locally, helping the entire Bridgewater township economy.

We have property rights at stake here. We have lease agreements, and would like it to be used for solar panels with the potential to return to farming in the future. But the solar ordinance changes will affect my right to use my land for solar farming. This opportunity will really help our families who rely on our land to make a living. No one should be able to say that we do not have the right to use property we own for our own welfare and benefit, as well as the benefit of our community and environment. For this reason, we would like our land to be included in the ordinance as land on which solar panels may be built.

Bridgewater citizens voiced a concern that the solar panels are not aesthetically pleasing to the pastoral view of our agricultural community. Our land is right on US-12, so the nature of aesthetically pleasing while driving on a highway versus revenue potential to the community does not seem valid. Further, the position of our acreage is such that the solar panels would not be viewable by any neighboring residences or drivers on the US-12 highway.

Solar energy is clean, reduces carbon emissions, improves the environment, decreases America's dependence on fossil fuels, and helps fight global warming. One day, these solar projects may be mandated by the federal government, we want the chance to shape how these projects happen in our own community. It is a fast-growing industry we should be investing in, but we need your help to do so. We urge you to listen to landowners and work with us to allow solar projects on our property.

Sincerely,



Kevin Kratz and Mary Kratz

Landowners Q 17-34-400-001 and Q17-35-300-002 in Bridgewater Township, Washtenaw County, Michigan

A



APPROVED