

MEETING MINUTES - DRAFT

Augusta Charter Township Regularly Scheduled Planning Commission Meeting

Township Hall
Wednesday December 21, 2016
6:30 p.m.

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by Vice Chair Bennett at 6:30 p.m.

2. Roll Call and Recognition of Visitors

In Attendance: Bennett, Howard, Lauderman Jr., Newsome, Selter, Spence. Planner Kreps was in attendance. Applicant Gabe Henehan was in attendance. There were 8 audience members in attendance.

All in the room arose, faced the flag, and stated the Pledge of Allegiance.

3. Approval of Agenda

Motion by Newsome, support by Lauderman Jr. to approve agenda. Motion carried unanimously.

4. Approval of Minutes

- a. ATPC Regular Meeting Minutes from November 16, 2016: Motion by Spence, support by Newsome to approve minutes as presented. Motion carried unanimously. Howard asked if the special land use was an attachment to the minutes. Planner Kreps responded that it was not.

5. Public Hearings

- a. SU 16-01, Sugar Creek Solar, G. Henehan – Special Land Use application consideration of Large Solar Energy Use (approximately 644 acres +/-) west of Hitchingham Road, between Willow and Arkona Roads.

Motion by Spence, support by Lauderman Jr. to open public hearing. Motion carried unanimously and public hearing was opened at 6:34 p.m.

Diane Delatorre spoke for Brandy (could not attend) and Joel LaCoss who live at 12340 McCrone Rd. Pointed out concern to proximity of site to their property. They are closest to development area. Noted concern over impact to property, value, and lifestyle. Have spoken to Henehan but have no satisfactory answer. They have no assurances of the discussed/proposed buffer.

Henehan spoke for Nextera. He has spoken to the LaCoss' in their home and Brandy via email. A concept plan has been submitted which shows the array has been pulled back from LaCoss property. Nextera goal is to satisfy residents. The Final plan will be presented with more detail. Solar arrays have no noise, dirt, etc. Reassurances will come with progression of project. Nextera has committed to do whatever they can but the owners prefer that project does not proceed.

Ms. Delatorre stated that the LaCoss' want assurance of a setback and a berm, as Henehan could leave the company or be overturned in his recommendations. They believe it will impact property value.

Planner Kreps reminded that before us tonight is the "use" of the land. We have prelim and final site plan review to come, where much more detail will be presented. Carlisle Wortman and others will review for distance, berms, trees, fencing, etc. At this stage of the application, it is not required to provide this level of detail. Nextera has pulled back from the LaCoss property in good faith effort to respond to concerns. Upon questioning by Bennett, Ms. Delatorre is satisfied as far as it goes.

Dan Devlin lives across the street from project. He would like to see the final plan now. Henehan stated that we are 2 years away from construction so it has not been designed yet. This is a conceptual project and the permitting process is very long. Henehan is attempting to get reliable information on property value impact, but there is no peer-reviewed scientific study on this. It was noted that this land is master planned for Planned Development. Documentation was available when the LaCoss' purchased their property that adjacent land could potentially be industrially developed. This use is far less intense than other industrial uses.

Lauderman Jr. commented that the open house was very good for information. These neighbors did not get the invitation for the open house which all agree was unfortunate. Planner Kreps noted that this area has been master planned for this use for at least 10 years.

Howard noted that this process has multiple steps, each step will be reviewed, and compromises are made to implement our master plan for our township. Nextera has very few of the required permits at this time. PC and TB review throughout, township consulting planners and engineers review and the road impact requires Washtenaw County review. There will be approvals in writing at each stage. Whether project meets master plan objectives, whether it meets zoning ordinance, and whether it meets criteria for proceeding must all be considered during review. After this stage, further review includes MDEQ, Washtenaw County, Water Resource Board, and Augusta Township.

Howard noted that for the "once-in-a-while" observer the process can be confusing. The project parcels have all been rezoned as mostly light industrial and a small portion of general industrial. Any industrial use is allowed (warehouse, etc.) If the solar array does not get developed in this location, another more intense industrial use could. Mr. LaCoss noted that he will go home to hear pile drivers. Henehan agreed that there is a construction phase which is noisy, but then the array operates silently for 30 years. Nextera will work with township and neighbors on the best time for noisy construction.

Motion by Newsome, support by Spence to close public hearing. Motion carried unanimously and public hearing was closed at 6:57 p.m.

6. Business Items

- a. SU 16-01, Sugar Creek Solar, G. Henehan – Special Land Use application consideration of Large Solar Energy Use (approximately 644 acres +/-) west of Hitchingham Road, between Willow and Arkona Roads.

Motion by Howard, support by Lauderman Jr. to approve the Special Land Use application of Large Solar Energy Use (approximately 644 acres +/-) west of Hitchingham Road, between

Willow and Arkona Roads. Motion Passed unanimously. Howard noted page 4 error that should read “nearby” as confirmed by Planner Kreps.

- b. Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance Amendment – PC Memo to Township Board – continued discussion.

Tobler noted the letter was addressed to former supervisor. New supervisor has not received any correspondence on this. New clerk also has not received the memo. Tobler recommends tabling discussion until new board and new supervisor can receive/review letter. He spoke to former clerk Giszczak who said there is a law that officers cannot be assigned a duty by the board without consent. New clerk is currently learning the job. Township Board is responsible for finding someone for tasks related to project applications.

Planner Kreps provided zoning ordinance amendments and it took a while to complete all for review at the same time. Generalizing duties was discussed, but the Board has to then appoint “on-the-spot” who is responsible. Carlisle Wortman can carry out responsibilities if they know what those are, but is concerned that they are not present at the township every day and does not want to hold up the processes through lack of communication. Howard confirmed that MTA does say that unless statutory, no member can be assigned a duty without their consent. No officer or liaison presented the memo to the board at any time. Tobler noted that Board is interested in having duties done in-house but will continue to outsource for a while until processes can be solidified. Spence asked if liaison can present the memo to the board. Selter to send memo to Howard, who is the board liaison, in addition to the meeting minutes at choward@augustatownship.org. Selter also to send final minutes to webmaster@augustatownship.org so that they can be posted.

Motion by Spence, support by Newsome for Board Liaison to present current and future information requiring board action to the Board. Motion passed unanimously.

Motion by Howard, support by Lauderman Jr. that both draft and final minutes be sent to clerk, liaison, and webmaster. Motion passed unanimously.

7. Public Comment

Tobler noted that Board is getting up to speed so won't likely vote on memo at January meeting.

8. Communications

None noted. Howard periodically receives notification for training – are others interested? Others responded yes. MTA – Michigan Townships Association should be sending emails.

9. Adjournment

Motion by Lauderman Jr., support by Newsome for adjournment. Motion carried unanimously and meeting was adjourned at 7:16 p.m.

Minutes submitted by Recording Secretary Selter.

**AUGUSTA CHARTER TOWNSHIP
NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING
PLANNING COMMISSION**

Notice is hereby given that the Augusta Charter Township Planning Commission will hold a Public Hearing on Wednesday, December 21, 2016 at 6:30 p.m. at 8021 Talladay Road.

The purpose of this public hearing is to receive public input on a Special Land Use Application (SLU 16-01) for a Large Solar Energy Facility located west of Hitchingham Road between Willow and Arkona Roads encompassing approximately 644 acres. Copies of the application and supplemental materials will be available for public viewing at the Township Hall and on the Township website www.augustatownship.org.

If you have any written comments or concerns, they can be sent to the Augusta Charter Township Planning Commission, P.O. Box 100, Whittaker, MI 48190-0100 and should be received prior to 10:00AM on Wednesday, December 21, 2016.

Augusta Township Planning Commission

Publish on or before December 6, 2016.