

**WASHINGTON COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION
PUBLIC REZONING INFORMATION MEETING AND REGULAR MEETING
May 3, 2021**

Due to current social meeting restrictions put in place by the Governor of Maryland because of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Washington County Planning Commission held its public rezoning information meeting and regular monthly meeting on Monday, May 3, 2021 at 7:00 p.m. virtually using Zoom software. No physical meeting took place.

Planning Commission members present were: Clint Wiley, Robert Goetz, Denny Reeder, Jeff Semler, David Kline, Jeremiah Weddle and Ex-officio County Commissioner Randall Wagner. Staff members present were: Washington County Department of Planning & Zoning: Jill Baker, Director; Jennifer Kinzer, Deputy Director; Travis Allen, Comprehensive Planner; Meghan Jenkins, GIS Coordinator; and Debra Eckard, Administrative Assistant; Washington County Department of Plan Review & Permitting: Ashley Holloway, Director; Rebecca Calimer, Chief of Plan Review; and Scott Stotelmyer, Planner.

Also present were: Myron Horst [6741 Sharpsburg Pike] and Brian Quinlan [RZ-21-001].

CALL TO ORDER

The Chairman called the public rezoning information meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

PUBLIC REZONING INFORMATION MEETING

RZ-21-001 – Calvert Energy LLC

Staff Presentation

Mr. Allen presented a text amendment application to Section 4.26 of the Washington County Zoning Ordinance to permit, as a special exception, Solar Energy Generating Systems (SEGS) on lands that fall both within the County's designated Priority Preservation Areas and inside an Industrial Mineral (IM) zoning district. This text amendment is narrowly tailored to be specific to the lands encompassed by the Boonsboro Quarry located on Benevola Church Road. Mr. Travis gave a brief history of the property and the Priority Preservation Areas.

Applicant's Presentation

Mr. Quinlan, the applicant, stated that the solar energy array is being proposed for the area on the southernmost tip of the mining operation which is currently undisturbed. This would be a community solar generating facility. Application has been made to the Potomac Edison PLOT program for inclusion of this solar array. This proposal is consistent with the State's goals for brownfield projects.

Discussion and Comment: Mr. Reeder asked how much of the property this amendment would affect. Mr. Allen stated that it would affect 165 acres, 83 acres of which are currently being considered for solar energy development.

Mr. Semler asked if any reclamation would be required on the property. Mr. Quinlan stated that no reclamation will be required at this time because mining operations are continuing.

Mr. Weddle asked what the current land use is on the property proposed for SEGS. Mr. Quinlan stated it is currently leased by a farmer. Mr. Weddle expressed his opinion this property is located within one of the most pristine Priority Preservation Areas in the County. He noted that the Planning Commission has been discussing ways to regulate SEGS and one way is to not allow them within the PPAs or on prime agricultural soils. Mr. Kline agreed with Mr. Weddle. Mr. Quinlan stated that the area in question is within the Mineral overlay and within the mining permit area. He expressed his opinion that disturbance from the mining operation would be far more excessive than if there would be a solar project in that area.

Mr. Kline stated that the applicant could proceed with an application to the Public Service Commission and ultimately get permission to locate a solar array on this property without the approval of the text amendment by County government. Mr. Goetz expressed his opinion that while this is the only property right now that is affected, there could be unintended consequences in the future if this text amendment is approved.

Public Comment

No public comments were received.

The public rezoning information meeting ended at 7:30 p.m.

REGULAR MEETING**MINUTES**

Motion and Vote: Mr. Semler made a motion to approve the minutes of the April 5, 2021 Planning Commission public rezoning information meeting and regular meeting as presented. The motion was seconded by Mr. Weddle and unanimously approved.

OLD BUSINESS**RZ-20-002**

Ms. Baker reminded members that a public rezoning information meeting was held in April for a proposed text amendment to the Washington County Zoning Ordinance for the inclusion of short-term residential rentals. Short-term residential rentals would not be owner-occupied facilities. One person spoke in favor of this amendment during the meeting.

Comments: Mr. Wiley and Mr. Kline expressed their opinions that these types of facilities would not have a negative impact on the hotels/motels in the area and would be a great asset to the tourism business in the County.

Motion and Vote: Mr. Reeder made a motion to recommend approval of the proposed text amendment to the Board of County Commissioners as presented. The motion was seconded by Mr. Semler and unanimously approved with Commissioner Wagner abstaining from the vote.

OTHER BUSINESS**6741 Sharpsburg Pike**

Mr. Holloway presented a request to determine if a change of use in a Rural Business Overlay zone from an antique gift shop to a tire repair facility would be a minor or major change. The subject site is located at 6741 Sharpsburg Pike. Mr. Myron Horst, applicant, stated that this site was previously the location of a trash business and later an excavation business.

Motion and Vote: Mr. Reeder made a motion that the requested change would be a minor change of use. The motion was seconded by Mr. Kline and unanimously approved.

Staff Approvals

Mr. Holloway presented the following information for the month of April for Plan Review – Land Use: 2 site plans, 4 standard grading plans, 1 simplified plat, 11 inspection and maintenance agreements, 3 storm water standard plans, 2 storm water concept plans; and 2 zoning adjustments.

Solid Waste Management & Recycling Plan Update

Mr. Allen reminded members that an overview of the draft plan was presented during a Workshop meeting held in mid-March. Chapters 1 – 3 have been reviewed and comments made by members during the April meeting. This evening we are seeking comments on Chapters 4 and 5 which were recently sent to members.

Consensus: The Planning Commission, by consensus, recommends that the Solid Waste Management & Recycling Plan be submitted to Maryland Department of the Environment for its review and approval.

UPCOMING MEETINGS

1. Monday, June 7, 2021, 7:00 p.m. – Washington County Planning Commission regular meeting

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Semler made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:10 p.m. The motion was seconded by Mr. Kline and so ordered by the Chairman.

Respectfully submitted,


Clint Wiley, Chairman