

Keene Township Planning Commission

Minutes from meeting dated November 6, 2024

Briggs called the meeting to order with the Pledge of Allegiance at 7:00 PM.

Roll Call:

Present: Denny Briggs, Ray Krieger, Nancy Solomon, Cori Wilber, Christine Hendrick, Corey Wojcik

Absent: Matt Stahlin

Recognition of Visitors:

There were approximately 40 members of the community present along with Zoning Administrator, Jeanne Vandersloot.

Approval or Change to Agenda:

Vandersloot mentioned that both October 7, 2024 minutes and October 14, 2024 minutes need approval. Wilber asked for clarification. Solomon explained how this happened.

Briggs motioned to table the setting of next fiscal meeting dates.

Wilber motioned to approve changes to agenda and Wojcik seconded. All in favor. Motion carried.

Approval of Last Two Meeting's Minutes:

Wojcik motioned to approve the October 7, 2024 minutes and Wilber seconded. All in favor. Motion carried.

Wojcik motioned to approve the October 14, 2024 minutes and Wilber seconded. Wojcik, Wilber, Krieger, Briggs and Solomon approved. Hendrick refrained from voting as she was not present for the meeting. Motion carried.

Report from Township Board Rep:

Wojcik had nothing to report.

Report from Zoning Administrator:

Vandersloot issued one zoning permit and no land divisions. She gave updates on residences on Pinckney Road, Lee Road and Rickert Road.

She also received several calls by appraisers and residents with miscellaneous zoning related questions.

Public Comments - Topics Not on Agenda:

A resident mentioned a tree branch hanging over some headstones in the Pinckney Cemetery. Wojcik stated it would be taken care of after the ground freezes to minimize damage to turf. This was addressed with the Township Supervisor, Shafer previously.

Old Business:

Briggs mentioned renewable energy and our attorney, Mike Homier's recommendation as it relates to PA233. He also mentioned that the suggested overlay district maps were posted to our Township's website. Copies of the maps were passed around to the community members present.

Briggs opened the floor to comments limiting them to one per person and a maximum of three minutes each.

Wilber spoke as a resident and recommended only having two overlay districts.

Briggs mentioned there are approximately 1800 acres in the three overlay districts which could result in 500-800 developed acres.

Colleen Timpson asked if there would be enough usable acres in district 1 and 2 because she is concerned about trees being cut down.

Wilber mentioned that she doesn't want to use good farmland.

Vandersloot stated that Invenenergy doesn't want to cut trees.

Hendrick asked if we can review the site plan during the application process. Briggs stated yes as it is subject to approval.

Community member, Adam Buschre, mentioned that district 2 is full of wetlands and there are heavy fines imposed if these are altered. Page 4, #14 in ordinance addresses wetlands.

Polly Wolff asked if all three districts would be used or are we going to start small? Briggs mentioned that if all three are approved for all renewables, they could possibly all be used.

Wendy Sheldon-Wolff mentioned our direction.

Wilber explained stating that our attorney recommended an overlay district for renewable energy. He suggested selecting land that won't have an adverse effect on residents. Our NE corner is sparsely populated, the SE corner is well populated and the NW corner is the river district. This is why District 3 was created.

Brett Hulliberger asked if we could move the west side of district 1 more towards the east as it would be further away from his residence. He recommended 300 yards instead of the current 100 yards.

Wilber asked the public if they would prefer staying with three districts but scale them down.

Shafer wants the overlay district maps to include acreages: District 1 = 489.09, District 2 = 461, District 3 = 489.09. He will work on tabulating workable acres.

Paul VanderZiel wants to stick with 500 usable acres.

Taylor Lewis said she wouldn't approve all three districts. The two original maps show initial proposed areas were each 250 acres (Hendrick stated).

Vandersloot informed Brett Hulliberger there is language in the ordinance where we can ask for better screening.

Colleen Timpson suggested not holding Invenergy to a certain screening height. Briggs read the information regarding screening in the ordinance located on page 6.

Bob Shafer mentioned that with a 50 foot setback in district 3 it would reduce the acreage by 21.5. This doesn't take into consideration the wetlands.

A resident mentioned transmission lines. Briggs stated we have no control over where the substation could be located and that ITC said it couldn't be in the project. This needs to be clarified. Jason Hardy asked to have the group updated.

Randy VanSpronsen asked if everyone is happy about overlay districts. He was informed that even if someone's land is in the district, they do not need to participate.

Polly Wolff asked about an injunction. Briggs replied stating this was a legal question that he was not qualified to answer.

Adam Buschre asked for 400 foot setbacks. Bo Smiley provided information.

Nate Wolff thanked the Planning Commission for their time and effort.

The westerly border of district 1 was discussed. Hendrick wants the setback at 750 feet which is close to the treeline.

Taylor Lewis stated that district 3 is ideal.

Hendrick stated districts 1 and 3 are the flattest.

Nate Wolff questioned battery storage and wind.

Bob Shafer mentioned limiting MW.

Solomon motioned to move the east and west border of district 1 in by 200 yards. No second.

Solomon amended the motion to move the east border in 200 yards. Wilber seconded. All in favor. Motion carried.

Corey motioned to move the west border of district 1 in by 200 yards. Motion seconded by Krieger. All in favor. Motion carried.

Krieger suggested moving the Sparks line to 200 yards to make it consistent with the rest of the district. Briggs stated to leave it as is.

Briggs asked about language. It was mentioned that we cannot use legal property descriptions.

Hendrick wants to remove one district so that the available acreage would be lower. Wojcik suggested removing district 3.

Hendrick motioned to remove district 2 because district 1 and 3 are closer to current transmission lines. Wilber seconded. Briggs, Wojcik, Krieger and Solomon did not agree.

Wilber mentioned removing half of district 1 and the west section of district 2.

Solomon motioned to remove district 3, leave district 2 as is and district 1 amended. Krieger seconded. Wilber and Hendrick voted no. Wojcik, Krieger, Briggs and Solomon voted yes. Motion carried 4 - 2.

Krieger motioned to send Ordinance, updated district 1 overlay map, and unchanged district 2 overlay map to Township Board for approval. Seconded by Solomon. Wilber and Hendrick voted no. Wojcik, Krieger, Briggs and Solomon voted yes. Motion carried 4 - 2.

New Business:

None.

Public Comment - Any Topic:

Residents asked about the parking during the elections.

Shafer requested updated maps for next week's Board Meeting. Wojcik asked that the maps include more of the surrounding areas.

Colleen Timpson thanked everyone and stated that we should all be friends.

Adjournment:

Wilber motioned to adjourn. Hendrick seconded. All in favor. Motion carried. Meeting adjourned at 9:02 PM.

Minutes documented by Nancy Solomon.