

Keene Township Planning Commission

Minutes from meeting dated Tuesday, October 1, 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, Christine Hendrick, Matt Stahlin, Cori Wilbur, Corey Wojcik

There were approximately 16 members of the community present along with Zoning Administrator, Jeanne Vandersloot and Attorney, Mike Homier from Foster and Swift.

Changes to the Agenda:

Briggs suggested giving Attorney Mike Homier the floor first and not address the following:

- Approval of last meeting minutes
- Report from Township Board Rep
- Report from Zoning administrator

Wojcik motioned to approve the changes to the agenda and Solomon agreed. All in favor. Motion carried.

Mike Homier introduced himself and discussed the following:

- The township is not required to do anything before November 29, 2024
- He is not in favor of caps
- He suggested an overlay district with 300-500 panel acres being enough to covered a demonstrated need plus some for growth factor (less than 5% per year)
- Keene Township's demand is less than 50 MW and he doubts if it will get past 100 MW
- Leases with private parties has no effect on the township (no consequences to the township)
- Setbacks is a policy choice. Higher setback = higher risk
- 500-600 foot setbacks are not out of the norm
- MPSC cannot change anything if we have an overlay district
- Don't combine overlay district and lot coverage
- Planning Commission determines location of overlay district(s)
- Ok to have more than one overlay district
- Most townships do not allow solar panels on lands enrolled in PA116. These owners would normally need to go out of this program to participate in solar. If these lands are in the overlay district, it would depend on the township's ordinance to say whether or not they can participate in solar. This was prohibited in the 2023 solar ordinance.

Question for Mike Homier from the PC:

Wojcik asked what percentage of townships have existing ordinances?

- Homier stated approximately 95%

Wojcik questioned a demonstrated need analysis (energy demand). Adjacent parcels? Adverse impacts?

Stahlin questioned setbacks, extreme setbacks, over 50 MW, and under 50 MW.

- Homier stated regarding over 50 MW that 300-800' if not worried about compatibility. However, range needs to be reasonable.

Public Comment:

Sandy Smiley asked how an overlay district would be described.

- Mike Homier stated that an overlay district must be described in a manner that is understandable such as section numbers, quarter section number, parcel numbers, addresses, etc.
- Mike Homier stated that the PC can help offset adverse effects of renewables location with additional screening, etc. Site Plan review can allow changes. Setbacks cannot be changed.
- Going through MPSC takes over a year.

Nate Wolf stated that not everyone replied to our survey.

- Mike Homier suggested engaging constituents.

Wilber asked if Mike Homier prefers setbacks from property lines or houses.

- Mike Homier prefers setbacks from property lines because they are consistent.

Jason Hardy asked about percentage of monies going to the township.

- Mike Homier and Bob Schafer offered information.

Stahlin asked about conflict of interest.

- Mike Homier mentioned the Township's bylaws. A conflict would need to be disclosed to the Township if someone stands to have a financial gain or loss. If you have an internal debate you need to step aside.

Polly Wolf asked about an irrevocable letter of credit and Ownership change.

- Mike Homier stated surety bonds are better.
- PC stated there is a clause in the ordinance that covers this topic.

Someone asked if it was ok to level the land and put up panels which would disturb the top soil.

- Mike Homier stated this could be addressed in the site approval plan.

Jeanne Vandersloot asked about overlay districts and how to add a description.

- Mike Homier offered his suggestions. He also mentioned that the PC can start small with the overlay districts and add more if necessary. It was mentioned that notices must be sent to all landowners in and within 300 feet of an overlay district. Mike also mentioned that some townships send notices to all residences.

Briggs mentioned tabling work on the ordinances due to time.

Mike Homier was dismissed at 8:47 PM. Community and PC were thankful for his time and knowledge.

Briggs asked the PC to think about where to have an overlay district before the next PC meeting on October 7th. Someone mentioned that they are not 100% sure about overlay districts. Need to come back with maps suggesting location(s) of overlay districts.

Wilber made a motion to adjourn. Seconded by Wojcik. All approved. Motion carried. Meeting adjourned at 8:53 PM.

Minutes documented by Nancy Solomon.