



**RAISINVILLE TOWNSHIP
PLANNING COMMISSION MINUTES
June 21, 2021**

CALL TO ORDER:

A meeting of the Raisinville Township Planning Commission was called to order by Chairman John Delmotte at 7:00 p.m. on Monday, June 21, 2021, he led the Pledge of Allegiance.

ROLL CALL: John Delmotte, Tom Woelmer, Craig Assenmacher, Ryan Timiney, Ann Nickel-Swinkey, Keith Henderson and Catherine Acerboni were present. Township Planner, Lucie Fortin, and Township Supervisor, Jerry Blanchette, was also in attendance. Michael Cressner and Amanda Hoffman from Orion Renewable Energy Group made a presentation.

APPROVAL of MINUTES: Motion to approve the minutes of the March 15, 2021 meeting and place on file by Keith. **Supported** by Tom. **Motion carried.**

NEW BUSINESS: Presentation by the Orion Renewable Energy Group. Orion does large "utility" scale solar projects. 6000 projects since 1998. They do solar and wind, but wants to do solar in Monroe County. They are in the initial stages to see if its an interest by landowners. Projects of this scale takes years to finish (would be by mid- 2020's: 4 years down the road, they might be able to come on line.)

Two things they do 1.) Tenant Transition Program: to subsidize tenant farmers to transition to other areas to rent. 2.) Preservation of the land. Efforts are taken to keep soil healthy- grasses & seed mixes are used to maintain soil health to convert gradually back to AG use.

Commission questions:

John- what is the typical lifespan of a solar project? - Michael- 30- year warranties for solar panels are the industry standard, so 30 years of solar farm production

Keith- maintenance is by Orion? Yes- the landowner only hosts the land

Craig- We did a survey about 3 years ago- results indicated strong desire to maintain AG integrity in our Township Posts are sunk deep- so what about tiled fields? Michael- Some grading is necessary to install, but "we have to repair what we break". Irrigation can also be an issue but they will repair.

Craig- What land conditions do you prefer? (Flat dry land is preferred). What are standard heights? Likely would use single axis tracking panels (tracks sun). Standard height is 12-15 ft.,

Catherine- What is the average acres of a project? Michael- we try for 6-10,000 acres. Panels are fenced in.

Ryan- Why not focus on areas near Fermi that has easier access to transmission lines? Michael- they are exploring this area but they bury many of those lines.

Tom- Rental rate competition is an issue. Do you see standardization among rental rates? Michael- explained variables regarding rates that the land owner may have (roads, buffers, berms etc.)

Mowing- used to do mowing but now focusing on seed mixes used under panels to avoid the need to mow. (Pollinator friendly mix. Native seed mix/regionally appropriate)

Lucie- 18" would be a problem regarding native seed

Lucie- What is your goal? Michael- to have at 300+ Mega Watt Project (1 mega watt / 5-7 acres. Will change according to how much land is actually involved.

Catherine- Who will take care of the landscaping maintenance? Orion will take care of maintenance of grasses. They would post a bond/insurance to ensure enough money to perform maintenance.

Jerry- What about long- term impacts on soil? Michael- the technology has been around in different parts of the country for a while. Why are the leases so long? Michael- at the end of your contract the cost is much cheaper than it is at the beginning of the contract.

John- Why lease and not purchase the property? Michael- "industry standard". Leases have been the way this is done. Who pays the property taxes? – Michael- The landowner does

Craig- What's the minimum size of a lease you would be interested in with a local farmer? Michael- Normally not less than 5 acres.



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Tom- If you had 2 large parcels say ½ mile apart, they may want to rent the land to be able to run easements in between to run cable.

John- What is the temperature variation? – Michael- there's only a slight increase in temperature due to solar panels, "heat islanding" hasn't occurred.

John- why not use freeway medians for solar panels? Michael- the government needs to maintain this space for purpose of repairing highways, etc.

John states his main concern is changing the nature of our Township from AG into something we won't like. Michael- they don't put down pavement and they use appropriate screening to try to maintain the integrity of an AG nature. Michael stated a 6- fold increase in solar energy growth. Driving force is the lack of fluctuation in price of solar energy & other renewable energy.

Craig asked how long after solar power is disconnected does it take to return to the carbon imprint? Michael- said it's minimal years but does not know the exact time frame

OLD BUSINESS:

Green Farms update:

Jerry reported that he spoke to Jason Miller (land contract holder) today and Green Farms has gone out of business and the property may default back to Jason.

MISCELLANEOUS: Tom questioned whether we need to review our Solar Ordinance after hearing the presentation. Chairman Delmotte requested that all members review the current Solar Ordinance and to send him any issues or suggestions and they can decide at a later date.

PUBLIC COMMENT: None by Rick Milner

NEXT MEETING: July 19, 2021 (no known business yet)

ADJOURN: Motion to adjourn by Ryan. **Supported** by Craig. **Motion carried.**
Meeting adjourned at 8:48 pm.

Minutes are preliminary until approved.