

JASPER COUNTY COUNCIL
9 A.M. / MAY 9, 2018
JASPER COUNTY COUNCIL CHAMBER
RIDGELAND, SOUTH CAROLINA
MINUTES

COUNCIL PRESENT: Chairman Darrell Thomas Johnson, Vice-Chairwoman Barbara Clark, Councilman L. Martin Sauls, IV, Councilman Henry Etheridge

STAFF: County Administrator Andrew Fulghum, Director of Administrative Services Ronnie Malphrus, County Attorney David Tedder, Director of Planning & Building Services Lisa Wagner and Development Coordinator Gwen Cooler

OTHERS: Kevin Smith and Colleague/Thomas & Hutton Engineering, Bill Moore/Adger Solar and Attorney Nicole Scott Ewing /Nexsen Pruet Law Firm

Chairman Johnson called the meeting to order at 9:10 a.m. and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Vice-Chairwoman Clark gave the invocation.

Bill Moore commented on ways Adger Solar had crafted their proposed solar energy plan and installation to fit Turkey Hill Plantation. He said that his company had learned a number of lessons from their "Moffatt I" initial installation on Highway 278 near Ridgeland, lessons they would be applying to subsequent projects including Turkey Hill.

Councilman Sauls asked about the height of the planned berm, to be constructed prior to any installation of the solar panels at Turkey Hill. Mr. Moore replied that the berm will completely block visibility of any and all solar panels at Turkey Hill Plantation.

Chairman Johnson asked about the installation's impact upon area wildlife. A funnel system throughout the solar installation to accommodate wildlife traffic was briefly discussed as was possible wildlife interaction with the solar panels, possible damage to the panels by or to wildlife, and any solar panel electrical threat to wildlife. Chairman Johnson further asked what would be the rationale for using a planned 8' fence, and whether 18"-24" shrubbery could be accommodated instead. Mr. Moore answered that

the primary reason for the fence is security since there are high voltage components within the installation as well. As to endangering wildlife, he stated that he knew of no related studies, but the use of sheep and goats to maintain vegetation within a solar farm is underway elsewhere. He stated that Dominion Energy intends to comply with Department of Natural Resources regulations.

Kevin Smith of Thomas & Hutton commented on the planned 10' berm fronted by a 30' natural vegetation closer to the highway.

Mr. Smith presented a video demonstrating how the planned berm, plantings and tree line completely eliminate the view of the Turkey Hill Plantation solar field from vehicles traveling on Highway 278. Mr. Smith added that the company plans to save as many trees as possible.

As to visibility of solar panels from Calf Pen Bay Road, Councilman Sauls, Councilman Etheridge and Chairman Johnson contributed to a discussion that solar panels should not be seen from any highway adjacent to solar installations, that the tree line should aid eliminating visibility of panels but that possibly the tree line would not hide all panels. A brief discussion followed as to the specifications of a solar panel (8'-9' with the average 6'-7'), and Mr. Moore commented that the higher the panel, the less effective its purpose.

Chairman Johnson asked about plans for storage of the huge amount of expected building materials with the Turkey Hill Plantation installation. Both Mr. Smith and Mr. Moore stated that it is felt that with the planting of vegetative screening and the construction of the berm initially, prior to the startup of any other project work, the visibility problem should be precluded.

Mr. Etheridge asked if the whole length of the solar field would be bordered by the berm, and Mr. Moore said that it would.

Vice-Chairwoman Clark noted that she is still not happy with the Moffatt I installation, and she said that she would like to take an actual tour of it.

Discussion followed as to temporarily using a nylon mesh screen to eliminate visibility at Moffatt I, since for the greater part of the project there is no tree line, planted vegetation is immature and panels are clearly visible from Highway 278. Councilman Etheridge noted

that the material he had been shown as a screening sample was unacceptable. It was also suggested that the installation of irrigation be considered for survival of future project plantings such as those at Moffatt I because of the very dry nature of the land.

County Attorney Tedder contributed that the landscaping company should be bonded, and that possibility might be addressed since many of the plantings had died. He suggested that a valuable lesson should have been learned with the Moffatt I project that starting at the beginning of construction with plantings rather than during the latter part is the preferred plan. Councilman Etheridge commented as well that the mistakes with the first project should be corrected, and that any installation on a main highway, such as with Moffatt I, should address visibility as a primary concern.

Discussion by Mr. Fulghum and Attorney Tedder followed re the FILOT aspect of Moffatt I, with Mr. Tedder suggesting that consideration should be given to collecting the fee in advance at the time of County Council's approval of the Development Agreement having to do with any and all solar energy installations in Jasper County.

Mr. Fulghum noted the need for a timeline for the Turkey Hill Plantation Solar Project and suggested scheduling a council workshop to expedite the study and approval process. Mr. Moore commented that the Turkey Hill timeline should be available by the end of summer 2018.

Mr. Etheridge noted the case of an individual who has an easement running throughout the solar installation area. He asked how that will be affected. Plats of the solar development property were consulted, and commitment was made by Mr. Moore to research the issue.

Chairman Johnson commented on the critical importance of providing Council with draft materials as early as possible on Turkey Hill Solar and all other solar energy projects seeking Council's study and approval. He noted that Council wants to "Get on with it!" and he stressed that the more time Council has for study of project specifications, the more intelligent Council's vote will be.

Councilman Sauls made the motion to adjourn at 9:50 a.m., and Vice-Chairwoman Clark seconded the motion. The motion carried with all members present voting in favor.

Respectfully submitted by:



~~Judith M. Frank, ccc~~ **BONNIE LAWSON**
Clerk to Council

Acting

Approved by:



~~D. T. Johnson, Jr.~~
Chairman