

Bengal Township Planning Commission (BTPC) Meeting Minutes January 26, 2022

Meeting Called to order by Chairperson Pung at 7:00 PM

Pledge of Allegiance was led by Chairperson Pung

Members Present: Lori Pung, Kurt Koenigsknecht, Eric Boak, Tom Miller and Brenda Zlotek

Public Present: Christopher Khorey – Township Zoning Administrator, Tom McComb -Township Inspector/ Enforcement officer, Kimberly Thelen of Dallas Township and Richard Poljan of Dewitt Township

Agenda - approved

Lori Pung motioned to accept BTPC meeting Minutes from 10/27/21 as amended. Motion seconded by Tom Miller- motion passed.

Public Comment on Non-Agenda items- None

Report from Tom McComb Bengal Township inspector: One ongoing “junk” complaint. Homeowner is working with the inspector to meet compliance and Mr. McComb will be walking the property with the homeowner to address any further issues that may still be out of compliance.

One solar array was constructed prior to stake out inspection and is non-compliant with the zoning ordinance. Informal letter has been sent from the township to the property owners and follow up formal letters will be forthcoming.

One complaint related to “roosters” the inspector went to the property and found no violation of the Zoning Ordinance.

Report from Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA) Kurt Koenigsknecht: Three Variance Appeals were presented to the ZBA since the last BTPC meeting. Two related to lot division and one related to Solar array. Lot division variances met criteria for approval. The Solar array Variance was partially granted pending the property owner’s resubmission of plans within the agreed upon time frame.

Old Business

-Ordinance changes

All proposed Ordinance changes have been sent to the Bengal Township Board for review at their February 2022 Meeting. To be followed with a newspaper announcement and Public hearing.

The Approval letter from the Zoning Administrator will now include” contingent upon inspection”.

Flowcharts and application form updates are still in progress

New Business

-Large scale Solar Facilities

A moratorium for one year was approved by the Bengal Township Board to review, revise and provide for public input on the Bengal Township Zoning Ordinance Article 6 Solar Energy Facilities. Chris Khorey the Bengal Township Planning Administrator, presented Ordinance information and explained to the Planning Commission that any changes to the current Ordinance should achieve the following: reflect the Master Plan of the Township; express purpose and intent; clearly define the difference in large scale

(commercial/utility scale) and small scale (freestanding residential or on sight solar arrays): define participating and non-participating parcels.

Furthermore, our current ordinance will need to have clear regulations to include, but not limited to: setbacks, screening, wetlands, ground cover, noise, drainage, glare, fencings, under and above ground utility connections, energy storage, maintenance, abandonment, decommissioning, Insurance and bonding. Mr. Khorey presented the Commission with some suggested changes and language to consider on all aforementioned items.

Mr. Khorey suggested the Planning Commission review the Master Plan at the next meeting to consider the number of available acres for Solar Installation as it reflects on the current number of acres available for livestock and crop production.

Public Comment on Agenda Items

Richard Poljan of DeWitt Township expressed concerns related to setback limits for Commercial Solar arrays and the potential loss of existing woodland being destroyed to make more open space for Solar panels.

Kimberly Thelen of Dallas Township requested a copy of the possible changes to the Solar Ordinance presented to the Commission from Chris Khorey. Mr. Khorey said he would be happy to email those to her.

Planning Commission comments to Public Comment: the Bengal Township Planning Commission thanked and appreciated Mr. Poljan and Ms. Thelen for their comments, concerns and interest in attending the Bengal Township Planning Commission meeting.

Meeting Adjourned by Chairperson Pung at 9:22 PM

Respectfully submitted by Brenda Zlotek

Bengal Township Planning Commission Secretary

Pending approval

Approved _02/_23_/2022