



Scott County Planning Commission

Regular Meeting

190 Beech Street Suite 201 Gate City, VA 24251

www.scottcountyva.com

Monday, January 13, 2025 at 6:00 PM

AGENDA

1. Call to Order: Chairman Rodney Baker
2. Invocation and Pledge of Allegiance: Mr. Glen Broadwater
3. Roll Call of Members/Establishment of a Quorum
 - Mr. Rodney Baker
 - Mr. Jeff Seay
 - Mr. Glen Broadwater
 - Mr. Charles Bullock
 - Ms. Jennings-Snodgrass
 - Mr. Scott Tipton
 - Mr. Jace Smith
4. Approval of Minutes
 - a. December 9, 2024
5. Citizen Expression
6. New Business
 - a. Select representative for the Capital Improvement Committee
7. Adjourn meeting to February 10, 2025 at 6:00 p.m.

The public is invited to attend and participate in Planning Commission meetings. This meeting is being held at a public facility believed to be accessible to persons with disabilities. Persons needing sign language interpreter services for the deaf must request these services five (5) working days in advance of the scheduled meeting by calling the 276-386-9111 (TDD enabled).

The Scott County Planning Commission met in regular session on Monday, December 9, 2024 at 6:00 p.m. in the Scott County Administrative Offices Board Room.

Commission Members Present:

Rodney Baker
Glen Broadwater
Jeff Seay
Charles Bullock
Jace Smith
Morgan Jennings-Snodgrass
Scott Tipton

Commission Members Absent:

Staff/Others Present:

Freda R. Starnes, County Administrator
Sally Kegley, County Attorney
Bill Dingus, Assistant County Administrator
David Gilmer, Building Official
Tim Williams, Building Inspector
William Johnson IV
Ben Wilson

Roger Carter
Stefanie Addington
Eddie Skeen
Chris Maness
New Leaf Energy Representatives
Citizens

Chairman Rodney Baker called the meeting to order.

Jeff Seay led the Pledge of Allegiance and Prayer.

APPROVE MINUTES

Minutes from the July 8, 2024 meeting were available to each Commissioner for review. **On a motion by Glen Broadwater, duly seconded by Charles Bullock, the planning commission hereby approves the July 8, 2024 minutes. All – aye.**

CITIZEN EXPRESSION

No one spoke during citizen expression.

PUBLIC HEARING – SPECIAL USE PERMIT – SOLAR GENERATION FACILITY - UTILITY

David Gilmer presented the special use permit application for New Leaf Energy on behalf of William Johnson III. Mr. Gilmer talked about the updated zoning ordinance with solar changes approved earlier this year.

Jessie Robinson and Quentin Wood spoke as representatives of New Leaf Energy. New Leaf has been developing solar projects for over 40 years. The proposed site will be on the AEP Shared Power Solar Program. Scott County citizens would have priority to subscribe and get a 10% - 15% reduction on their power bill. Community solar projects are 5mw or less. The projects energy will go directly into the grid. Transmission lines will be upgraded at New Leaf's expense. There are distribution lines already in place. The project is 4000' away from the road. The landowner would retain ownership of the land. The proposed site is a 4mw facility with approximately nine acres of solar panels. A glare study was conducted by a 3rd party. No glare was noted from the road or adjoining property. A storm water pond

will be located on the property. Three phase power is along Rye Cove Memorial Road already which is a positive for the proposed site. Third party studies were also completed for archeological and threatened and endangered species. The site has no species identified as endangered. There are no impacts to wetlands or streams.

Construction of the project is estimated to take 6 to 8 months. The life-cycle of the development is 40 years and will be operated remotely.

A bond with the County will be issued for decommission of the project at its end of life. It takes 4 to 6 months to remove the facility. Everything will be removed above and below ground. The materials are recyclable. The facility will use tier 1 panels that are non-hazardous.

Storm water will be managed by using impervious panels. The site will be analyzed as it is currently and when the site work is complete. The site will be studied again to make sure additional runoff isn't occurring. DEQ would issue the permit and monitor.

The change to property values have been studied in other areas with solar projects. Sale prices before and after a project show no change on housing sale prices.

Seventeen people attended the community meeting. One individual that couldn't attend the community meeting has also met with New Leaf on site.

The project would bring in additional revenue for the county. Tax revenue is estimated to be \$421,000 over the life of the project. It would also bring an updated power circuit along the route. Scott County citizens would have the first opportunity to subscribe to the AEP Shared Power Solar Program. New Leaf will also offer a voluntary payment to Duffield Fire and Rescue to help with their operating expenses.

The project design meets or exceeds the requirements outlined in the Scott County Zoning Ordinance.

Mr. Broadwater asked where the panels are manufactured? Ms. Robinson replied that the panels are manufactured in Asia. Domestic panel manufactures are beginning to form.

Chairman Baker asked for explanation on the subscribe program. Ms. Robinson replied the program is for citizens that can't have solar on their property. Each project has a set number of homes allowed which is based on the amount of power produced.

Mr. Seay asked how often are inspections conducted. Mr. Wood replied that DEQ guidelines will be followed.

Mr. Bullock asked how often will water be tested from the retention pond? Mr. Wood replied that the waster isn't tested because it just catches the runoff. Mr. Bullock asked if there was anything in the panels that could rupture and leak. Mr. Wood stated that lead from soldering would be the only thing. Ms. Robinson replied that the panels are built to withstand hail and high winds. They are made out of tempered glass.

Mr. Broadwater asked what kind of fencing would be around the project to keep out deer and bear. Mr. Wood replied that the fence will be 7' high. The Virginia Department of Wildlife recommends a corridor for the wildlife to move around if they get in the facility. This project would allow for that.

Vegetation will be pollinators of our species. Sheep can be used as well but would need a water source and someone to look after them.

Mr. Bullock asked how much noise would be produced? Mr. Wood stated that they do not anticipate any noise at the property line.

Mr. Tipton asked what happens after 40 years. Mr. Wood explained that everything would be removed. The road is already in place and that would remain. The pond would be filled in.

Mr. Broadwater stated that if this is so economically inclined why not redo them in 40 years. Mr. Wood replied that a new special use permit would be needed to continue past the 40 years.

Mr. Tipton asked how the panels are disposed of after the 40-year period. Mr. Wood stated that the panels would be recycled. Concrete would be busted up and used for fill or taken to the landfill.

Mr. Bullock asked what the efficiency rate is when new. Mr. Wood stated that the panels are warranted for 25 years. They are 88% efficient after the 40 years.

Mr. Broadwater asked about the energy loss of the project. Mr. Wood stated that would be a question for an electrical engineer.

Ms. Robinson stated that five letters of support have been received for this project.

Mr. Baker explained the county ordinance and the special use permit process.

Mr. Terry Fields from the Rye Cove community spoke in opposition of the solar project. Mr. Fields owns 100 acres that adjoins the property. The property is bowl shaped and funnels down toward the road. There is a spring located at the bottom of the hollow from this project that people stop and get drinking water and water for their cattle. Mr. Fields stated that he had read some information on the internet about the dangers of solar panels. He is worried about them coming from Asia. He is also concerned about the noise. He likes his peace and quiet. He has been gathering signatures against the project. Citizens were originally told a 20-year lease and now they are saying the lease is 40 years. New Leaf and William Johnson are here to make money, not to look out for Scott County. Why would the water not be tested? They don't want to be liable. Mr. Fields stated he is working on signatures in Rye Cove and Casteel Hollow.

Mr. Ben Wilson with Energy Right spoke on the role of his company. Energy Right is a non-profit that focuses on property rights and importance of energy security. Bedford County will have a manufacturer for solar panels and a recycling facility. There are direct economic benefits and these projects need to be considered on their merit.

Mr. William Johnson IV from the Rye Cove community spoke in favor of the project. Mr. Johnson stated that Mr. Fields is envious of his father. There are a lot of people in favor of the project. Mr. Johnson stated he has done research too about the possible water contamination and didn't find anything. Mr. Fields lives 2.5 miles from the site. The spring is one mile from the site.

Mr. Baker stated that the project is fairly well-situated and is out of sight.

Mr. Tipton stated his concern is after the 40 years and the condition the property will be left in.

Mr. Baker stated that a bond will be held so that the money is there to remove the panels.

Mr. Bullock stated that he is concerned with who will own the facility in 10 to 15 years. Does the bond increase with inflation? Is there a concern for ground water contamination if the panels get destroyed?

Mr. Seay asked how often the panels will be inspected? Mr. Wood stated that the panels are monitored 24/7 remotely and damage is quickly fixed. They are onsite every two weeks to a month for mowing.

Mr. Bullock asked if any of the New Leaf projects have been sold. Mr. Robinson stated that New Leaf is a developer and the sites are sold. Mr. Bullock asked how many times their projects have been sold to someone other than the original owner. Ms. Robinson replied that these are long term projects and beneficial for long term ownership.

Mr. Baker stated that this is not a unique technology.

On a motion by Scott Tipton, duly seconded by Charles Bullock, the planning commission hereby recommends to the Board of Supervisors not to approve the Special Use Permit. A roll call vote was conducted by the Secretary:

Mr. Baker – No

Mr. Seay – Yes

Mr. Broadwater – Yes

Mr. Bullock – Yes

Ms. Jennings-Snodgrass – No

Mr. Tipton – Yes

Mr. Smith – Yes

The motion to not recommend approval carried on a 5-2 vote.

NEW BUSINESS

Ms. Starnes presented questions that Virginia Tech wanted clarification on regarding their update of Scott County's Comprehensive Plan.

- 1) When you think about the final product, what do you want to see in an updated comprehensive plan? Do you want something that looks like the current plan or something different? The consensus was a different look. We are looking for a plan that showcases the county's assets.

- 2) What are the biggest limitations or weaknesses you find when using the current plan for decision making? (examples: goals are too broad, no timelines/schedules/deadlines, inadequate data, etc.) What do you need so that the plan works for you as a guiding document? The consensus was that the current plan was too broad.
- 3) Are the Goals, Objectives and Policies still relevant? What modifications would you make so that they reflect your current thinking? Some suggestions were made to add a widening project of Route 71 and to focus on retail developments in the county.
- 4) What are you planning to do to engage the community in the planning process? Ms. Starnes suggested a citizen questionnaire that would be available to download from the county website.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further discussion, the meeting was adjourned to January 13, 2025 @ 6:00 p.m.

Secretary