

WABASH COUNTY PLAN COMMISSION

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WABASH COUNTY PLAN COMMISSION
BOARD MEETING MINUTES

December 2, 2021

**Wabash County Plan Commission Board
Wabash County Court House
Wabash IN 46992**

Board Members: Randy Curless, Jeff Dawes, Patty Godfroy, Sam Hann, Doug Rice, Christian Rosen, Geoff Schortgen, Cheri Slee, Susie Stephan, Joe Vogel
Attorney Larry Thrush, Plan Director Mike Howard, Secretary Libby Cook

Present: Randy Curless, Jeff Dawes, Patty Godfroy, Sam Hann, Doug Rice, Christian Rosen, Geoff Schortgen, Cheri Slee, Susie Stephan, Joe Vogel, Larry Thrush, Mike Howard, Libby Cook, Mark Milam, Joe Brown, Mary Siders, James Hummel, Perry VanMeter, Glenn & Sheila Butcher

The Wabash County Plan Commission Board met on Thursday, December 2, 2021. Board chairman, Randy Curless called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm. Mr. Curless asked if there were any additions or corrections to the minutes of the November 4th meeting, there being none he asked for a motion to approve the minutes as written. Mr. Vogel made the motion to approve the minutes, this was seconded by Mrs. Stephan, the minutes will stand approved.

Mr. Curless: The first item on the agenda is Mr. Jim Hummel, Wholesale Renewable Energy Manager with Duke Energy

Mr. Hummel: My title is a little bit misleading; I actually work in our renewables policy and strategy group. We talk about things as we plan for the future as more renewables come on line and subjects like this, how much transmission capacity will we need to have and how much additional capacity will we need to have. Where these sites will be located on and things of that nature are what I specialize in. I didn't bring a prepared presentation tonight and the reason why is this is a very difficult matter to talk about. I

wish transmission was as simple as taking a bucket and being able to fill it up and say that's how much you have but it's not it is more of a situation where we have several factors coming in, where load is located, and what kind of a line you have going in there, all plays into a study aspect. For Duke Energy the way we look at that is if you are going to connect to our distribution system with a net metering customer or a customer who is going to be considered a qualified facility, to sign up through our inter-connection process, that process will start, our engineers will study what kind of load that will put onto the line, the location of it, and if we will have to add distribution lines or upgrade those lines that are there. That is Duke's responsibility to do that. On the transmission side it is a little bit different, we maintain and own, but we do not operate the transmission system. Those are operated by Mid-Continent Independent Systems Operator and those offices are located in Carmel, IN and they control the whole grid from Canada to Louisiana. That facility is a magnificent facility to look at that to connect with our distribution system you must sign up for the interconnect, it is a technological wonder, they have 2 football field size rooms with screens all around them. You can see power that flows all the way from Canada to New Orleans. In that case they are the ones responsible for taking the applications for the larger customers, I looked and saw that right now there are two Wabash County projects in the MISO Cue, if I remember correctly they are right around 100 megawatts apiece, that they are studying right now. That process takes quite a long time to get through, it is about a three year process to get through that. When they get done, as they move forward with each phase of the process they will tell the developer, whoever has put their name into the cue this is how much it is going to cost to upgrade the transmission system for you to be able to build your facility. Depending on where it is located it can be very small, if it's somewhere else it can be very costly, that developer is responsible for that cost. As they move through and it gets done the developer, if it's in our service area which Wabash County is, that transmission line will then become our responsibility after the completion of it. From then on we will maintain it and we will make sure that it works. I wish I had a simple answer, this is how much you have on your transmission system, this is how much you have on your distribution system, but it is just not that easy. Mr. Hummel then opened the floor to questions from the Board. Mr. Howard provided Board members with maps of the where the main power lines are located in the county. Mr. Vogel asked about the lines that run east to west in the N. Manchester area and then south to Wabash, are those lines capable of being hooked up to it. Mr. Hummel, they would be capable of being hooked up to, there might need to be some upgrades, it would depend on what the inter-connections study shows. Mr. Vogel asked, on the upgrade for those lines are you responsible for those or is the developer? Mr. Hummel, yes, if you have enough land. Mr. Vogel asked if you would need to be close to those lines. Mr. Hummel said it would be much better if you are close to them the closer you are to them and the less amount of strain that is on that line, not a dense neighborhood or something like that always helps too. We are in an everchanging environment right now too, we have people putting Tesla walls in their garage right now and that puts a strain on conductors and things of that nature, so this is everchanging as we go along. The timing of the interconnection is

ruminant, and where you are at in the process of seeing what's going on, it really plays a difference into this. It makes a big difference if you are talking about a 2 mega-watt facility verses a 100 mega-watt facility. Mr. Vogel asked about the new lines that were put in by the Northfield school across 200 N, is that line heavy enough to connect on to? Mr. Hummel said yes, depending on the interconnection agreement, especially if it is out there by a school, there are quite a few schools across the state that are interconnecting into the grid and doing net-metering. There are quite a few farms that are doing the same thing. Mr. Schortgen asked, you said it takes about 3 years to totally install, at what point do the solar companies come to you. Mr. Hummel said that when they go in to MISO, they do so confidentially, the one thing that we do know is that there is a developer that is out there that wants to hook into the transmission system and what voltage they want to do. We will not know who that developer is until the project is done, an example is in western IN, Next Era who is a developer built a windfarm in that area and they built 17 miles of transmission line to hook into Duke Energy's interjection point which is at Cayuga in Vermillion County. We did not know who that company was until about 3 months before they went live, and they are selling their power not to us but to NIPSCO. Mr. Schortgen asked, you are just the infrastructure that they are hooking into. Mr. Hummel said we are the infrastructure, we will be involved in building plants like these and we have projects that are in MISO right now, I can tell you that the two projects that are in Wabash County are not our projects. Mr. Hann asked, would they look at our Solar Ordinance before Duke would ever hear about it, is that correct? Mr. Howard said I would think so, the gentleman from Next Era has already been in contact with me, he is supposed to come back after the first of the year and talk with the Board. Mr. Hummel said that from their development standpoint that is the first thing they would do, to look at the solar ordinances in the county to see if it is a favorable prospect to build in the county. Mr. Howard asked Mr. Hummel if he could tell the Board what the current load capacities of the lines are. Mr. Hummel said not off the top of his head, but he could tell them that these capacities you have like 740 KV, that is what it holds so at one point in time that pipe could hold that much. Mr. Vogel asked if Mr. Hummel would know an approximate cost for this to go a mile or two from the transmission lines. Mr. Hummel said he did not, especially from a transmission line because MISO determines what that cost is and they tell that developer this is how much it will cost. We do have models that will model that but most of the developers, including utilities that are in this pipeline, are waiting on those calls, an example, right now for the 2020 cue at MISO they have some study costs for phase one that should come out in the middle of December. Those developers are waiting with baited breath to see what those dollar amounts are because it has a real impact on being able to move forward with that project or not. If the transmission costs are really high and they cannot find a buyer for that power, through a purchase power agreement or to sell it to a utility, or onto the wholesale market they may not be able to continue that is a business decision they have to make. The longest I have seen is 17 miles and that was very, very expensive, 17 miles of active transmission line is a long way. Mr. Howard said that one thing that puzzled him when he met with the gentleman from Next Era, he was talking about our ordinance and some of the concerns

he had, he was concerned that if you have 120 acres parcel and you were only going to use 60 acres of that for the solar panels they still lease the whole 120 acres, why? Mr. Hummel said that to get into the MISO cue you have to have control of the whole parcel, and part of that land may be too wet to get the solar panel in there, some of it could be ancient Indian burial ground, some of it might be environmental concerns with endangered species or things like that. Usually when you buy 500 acres you are not going to get to use the entire 500 acres.

Mr. Schortgen: 3 months' notice before going live that tells me that they have not given much transparency as far as the project. Are they maybe transparent to the Plan Commission or County Council members or things like that? Mr. Hummel said these companies are very transparent because in order to get the project done the most economically there are certain things they need from the county.

Mr. Curless: The next item on the agenda is SE #16, Glenn Butcher for a pond in Noble Township. Mr. Butcher stated that the property the pond will be located on is the 22 acre parcel to the east of Bass and Bucks. His daughter is planning to build a home on the property but wants to put a pond in first. It will be a $\frac{3}{4}$ acre pond, Victor Treska and Troy Eads will be working with me on the pond, I will be doing most of the excavating myself. Mr. Howard shared aerial photos of the property. There are no variances; no flood plain or flowage easements; the pond will have approximately $\frac{3}{4}$ acre water surface area; maximum depth 12 feet; will have an emergency overflow; watershed of 11 acres. At this time the drainage board has not met, Mrs. Slee stated that it is not a county regulated drain in that area. Mr. Curless asked if there were any questions or comments, there being none he asked for a motion for a favorable recommendation to the BZA. Mr. Vogel made the motion to give a favorable recommendation to the Board of Zoning Appeals, this was seconded by Mr. Rosen, the motion carried.

Mr. Curless: next on the agenda is Special Exception #17, Rhonda Siders for a mobile home in the Town of Roann. Mr. Howard said the deed to the property is currently under Rhonda Siders at 410 E. Adams St. in Roann. The request involves lots 41 and 42 in the corporate limits of Roann. Mary Siders is here tonight representing Rhonda. I have discussed with the Siders that the deed is only in Rhonda Siders name; it would need to be changed to have Mary's name on it along with Rhonda's. Mr. Howard asked Ms. Siders:

- Where Rhonda currently lives, she replied right beside of the lots, Mr. Howard said that would be to the north of the lots. Where do you live currently? Mary replied the next house north of her.
- Who will be residing in the mobile home? Mary replied that she and Mr. Brown will live there. Joseph Brown stated his name for the record and said that he works for the police departments in Miami County and we do help Wabash.
- Where is the mobile home you are looking at located now? Mary replied in Grant County.

- Have you verified that the personal property taxes for the mobile home are current, she said yes we have.
- Are you and Rhonda current on all property taxes for properties you own, Mary replied yes.
- Do you have someone to move the mobile home in, Mr. Brown said a buddy of his named Russ.
- By Wabash County rules and our policies, a mobile home can't be altered, a roof, deck/porch cannot be attached to the mobile home, that violates the certification of the mobile home. If this is approved the hitch has to be removed and the entire home has to be skirted.
- Have you talked with anyone from the Town of Roann as far as your septic or water? Mr. Brown said not yet, we wanted to get the approval first. Mr. Howard said that with the Town of Roann being incorporated we still do their paperwork and they follow our ordinances. I have contacted the Town Board to ask how they feel about this and they are not in favor of a mobile home being placed in the corporate town of Roann. They are trying to work on their development plan and they don't want mobile homes placed in the incorporated part of the town. We have discouraged mobile homes in the rural county as much as we can our rules state that they have to be placed in a mobile home park. Mr. Howard explained the fees and process of appearing before the Board of Zoning Appeals.
- This Board tonight will just review the information and give either a favorable or unfavorable recommendation to the BZA, if they give an unfavorable recommendation you still have the opportunity to continue and go before the BZA or to withdraw, at this time you haven't spent any money for the application, the legal, or mailers.
- Mr. Brown said the Roann is a neutral area for him working in Miami County and Wabash County. We are planning to let our son have the house we are living in

Mrs. Slee asked if they have plans to build a home on the property, Ms. Siders said yes, there was a home there at one time. We talked to the electric company yesterday about where to put the service for when we build. Mrs. Godfroy asked about a timeline for the house, Mr. Brown said he is hoping for 24 - 36 months. Mrs. Stephan asked if that is something you would do on your own or would you have a contractor? Mr. Brown said I would probably do some of it but most of it would be contracted out. Mrs. Stephan said that our experience has been with some building it themselves is that their 24 or 36 months becomes 5 years. Mrs. Godfroy asked if they have the funding available for the house. Mrs. Slee said in the past we have allowed that, a mobile home while the home is being build but we have to have the guarantee that house will be there. Mr. Dawes asked if the town is still opposed if there will be a home built in the next 2 - 3 years. Mr. Howard noted that he didn't know if the town was aware that was the plan, we would have to go back and ask them. Mr. Brown said that they have been looking at 5 acres of ground at the intersection of St. Rd. 15 and St. Rd. 16, so are we going to have this issue everywhere? Mr. Howard said that

we have had numerous questions about that property, he would never want anything in there because of the flooding. He was told that there is a county regulated drain that runs through that property. Mrs. Slee noted that the drain does have a right of way there of 150 feet on each side of it that you are not to put a permanent structure in it. Mr. Howard offered to get in touch with the Town Board and see if they would be more in favor of the mobile home if there was to be a home built there with the next 2 - 3 years. Mrs. Slee asked if there could be a time frame put on building the new house. Mr. Howard said he thought that would be for the BZA to determine and put in the conditions. Mr. Thrush said that could be included in the conditions. Mr. Rosen asked if the town still has to approve it, Mr. Howard said he would check with them and let them know what their plans are, the town could either say they would approve it or they don't want it, I think the town's thoughts would carry some weight with the BZA. Mr. Curless asked for a motion on a recommendation to the BZA. Mr. Hann made the following motion, give a favorable recommendation to the BZA with the following requirements: a timeline for the construction of a new home; proof of funding for the new home; and the town of Roann is ok with this. This was seconded by Mr. Rice, the motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Curless: next on the agenda is Special Exception #18, Perry VanMeter for a gunsmith business in an ag zoned district in Liberty Township. Mr. Howard said that Mr. VanMeter resides at 11980 S 100 E, LaFontaine, on a 1 acre parcel. Mr. VanMeter said his goal is to get a small business going doing gunsmithing, repairs, cleaning and possibly transfers. He does have his LLC license and is working on getting his FFL license. The business would be by appointment only and there will not be a shooting range. Mrs. Godfroy asked if he will have a way to test fire a gun, Mr. VanMeter said he does have a backstop for his own personal use. Mrs. Godfroy asked if he will be doing any cold bluing and will he work on all guns. Mr. VanMeter, cold bluing possibly, there are some guns he won't work on. Mr. Hann asked if the business will be located in the garage, Mr. VanMeter said yes. Mrs. Godfroy asked, you can't keep guns overnight until you have your FFL, Mr. VanMeter said that is correct.

Mr. VanMeter said that he will not be selling guns, I will transfer guns and help with the paperwork. Mr. Vogel asked if he could sell someone a new gun. Mr. VanMeter said with the FFL he could sell a new gun. Mr. Vogel asked about security on the building. Mr. VanMeter said he has a security system on his whole house. Mr. Vogel noted in the past we have required a secure locked box for shipments will you have something like that? Mr. VanMeter said he would have to work on that. Mrs. Godfroy said that someone has to sign for it if it is a firearm, ammo is not that way. Mr. Vogel said it should be put in a secured box. Mr. Howard said the Board would recommend that he notify authorities of the business and the materials that are in the building. Mr. VanMeter said as far as gun powder I am not planning to store much, just what I need to have which won't be much. Mr. Curless asked for a motion on a recommendation to the BZA. Mr. Vogel made the motion to give a favorable recommendation to the BZA, this was seconded by Mrs. Godfroy, the motion passed.

Mr. Curless: Next on the agenda is an update from Mr. Dawes on Imagine One 85. Mr. Dawes said that he received an e-mail that the next meeting will be January 25, 2022. The plan will come back to the steering committee prior to that, then they will present it to the full Board.

Mr. Howard gave the following updates:

- Solar ordinance revisions, the Plan Commission and the Co. Commissioners have passed the solar ordinance. It was sent to Mr. Downs to edit for it to be put in the County Ordinance draft.
- A solar company is looking at 500 – 600 acres right now and possibly up to 1000 acres in the county.
- Next Era (solar company) would like to meet with the Board in 2022, he is very concerned about our setbacks and about our decibel level. Those are things we would have to work on and talk about.

Mr. Rice said the ordinance is in place so that is what they have to go by. Mr. Howard said yes, then we would all have to sit down together and work out the agreement with the county and the company. Mr. Rice asked about the wording regarding waiving the setback. Mr. Howard said the chart in the ordinance clarifies the setback waiver between participating and non-participating landowners. Mr. Schortgen asked if the 500 – 1000 acres is one plot of land. Mr. Howard said that 1 parcel is 500 + acres. Mrs. Neininger said that Next Era is a very reputable company, the gentleman that met with me did apologize for not coming to the county first.

Mr. Hann said that Ms. Neininger said that we could cap the number of acres that could be used in the county, how can we do that if we felt like we needed to cap, say no more than 4,000 acres can be used? Mr. Howard said in the new county ordinance we will have AG1 and AG2 land, if we allowed 2% of AG2 to be used for solar that would have been slightly under 1% of the total ag land in the county. I would like to have the total ordinance in place so that we have the two ag zones before we would set a percentage. Mr. Hann said he agrees as long as we get that done within the 3 year mark or before they start signing contracts. Mr. Rice noted that with the setbacks we have for residences it will be very difficult for any big project to come in, probably close to impossible. Mr. Howard said he ran the setbacks on the 500 plus acre parcel and out of that there would only be about 165 acres they can use. One other thing that concerns me is that the land owner does not live in Wabash County, therefore some of the taxes would not benefit Wabash County.

Mr. Howard informed the Board that the entire draft of the County Ordinance has been gone through. I am still working on some edits.

Complaint Reviews:

- Kenny Miller adding a building. Mr. Howard asked Mrs. Slee if the Drainage Board going to take action? Mrs. Slee said that they haven't discussed it. Mr. Howard said that Mr. Miller has been sent a letter telling him that he is out of compliance with the County Ordinance and that he needs to come in and apply for the two buildings and if he does that he would be in compliance with the Plan Commission. While we have a setback from a ditch or certified drain if it is an agriculture building it is permitted to be within that 100 foot setback, I would think we would consider those for agricultural use. Mrs. Slee said that the Drainage Board can tell him to remove it. Mr. Howard said, I am talking about the Plan Commission only. I sent him a letter a month ago and have not heard anything, I would like a motion to have Mr. Thrush send him a follow up letter. Mr. Dawes made the motion to have Mr. Thrush send a follow up letter, this was seconded by Mrs. Stephan, the motion carried.

There being no further business Mr. Curless asked for a motion to adjourn. Mr. Vogel made the motion; this was seconded by Mrs. Godfroy. The meeting adjourned at 8:15 pm.

Libby Cook
Secretary, Wabash County Plan Commission
MTH