

# Wabash County Plan Commission

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## Wabash County Plan Commission Board

Board Members: Randy Curless, Jeff Dawes, Sam Hann, Patty Lengel, Mark Milam, Doug Rice, Christian Rosen, Geoff Schortgen, Cheri Slee, Joe Vogel

Staff: Larry Thrush, Board Attorney; Brian Campbell, Plan Director; Amanda Lyons, Administrative Assistant

## Meeting Minutes of Wednesday, June 14, 2023

Roll call was taken with the following present:

Board Members: Jeff Dawes, Patty Lengel, Mark Milam, Doug Rice, Christian Rosen, Geoff Schortgen, Cheri Slee

Staff: Larry Thrush, Board Attorney; Brian Campbell, Plan Director; Amanda Lyons, Administrative Assistant

Absent: Randy Curless, Sam Hann, Joe Vogel

Others present: Cheryl Ross, Suzanne Peebles, Roger Peebles, Louella Krom, Janet Lyons, Bonnie Keen, Mark Keen, Joe Cook, Gary Nose, Donna Nose, Roger McGinnis, Ramona Johnson, Cathy Cruz, Cindy Hileman, Dan Metzger, Lee Smith, Karen Smith, Tonya Hoppes, Jerome Malott, Keith Cole, Connie Cole, Marge Young, Larry Young, Nicky Burnsworth, Bill Burnsworth, Lorraine Truss, Sherman Truss, Dan Dale, Deb Dale, Diane Morris, Conrad Morris, Pam Hawkins, Phyllis Hawkins, Michael Hawkins, Marcella Palmer, Cheryl Ridgeway, Denise Enyeart, Charles Enyeart, Latheda Metzger, Eileen Weck, Richard Daihl, Deborah Cusack, Karen Kelley, Zach Donaldson, Sharon Strange, Chris Hickman, Rachel Hoppes, Todd Hoppes, Cris Renn, Carol Cly, Matt Weitzel, Keith, David

The Wabash County Plan Commission Board met on Wednesday, June 14, 2023 at 808 Manchester Avenue, Wabash. The meeting was called to order at 7:00 pm by Board Co-Chairman Mr. Christian Rosen. Mr. Rosen began by asking if a quorum was present, Mr. Campbell indicated yes.

Mr. Rosen: This is a special meeting called by written request from two members of the Commission per Wabash County Advisory Plan Commission rules of procedure. No other business may be considered at a special meeting except by unanimous consent of the Commission. A recommendation request has been asked for from the Wabash County Board of Commissioners to impose a temporary moratorium on the issuance of improvement location permits for commercial solar energy systems in an A1 zoning district. Note that, pursuant to Indiana Code 36-7-4-223, Plan Commission member and chairman Randy Curless is disqualified and may not participate as a member of the Plan Commission in any hearing or recommendation of the plan commission concerning this matter inasmuch as he has a direct or indirect financial interest therein.

Mr. Rosen reviewed the expectations for those in attendance. Mr. Rosen then asked for a motion to open the public hearing. Motion made by Ms. Lengel, second by Mr. Dawes. Board proceeded to a roll call vote; motion passed 6-0.

Mr. Rosen asked if Mr. Campbell had received any written statements that needed to be read. Mr. Campbell indicated no statements had been received from either side. Mr. Rosen then called on those who would like to speak in support of a moratorium.

Ms. Suzanne Peebles spoke first, reviewing the location of the proposed sites. She stated the first section is south of State Road 124, between State Road 13 and Meridian Road, to County Road 850 S, for a total of 2,073 acres. A second one is west of State Road 13, State Road 124 to 700S between 650 W and 500 W, which is 580 acres. It would be 2,653 acres grand total. Leases were signed as early as May 2021. 62% of the acres involved are with out of county land owners. Sixteen leases have been signed by 10 landowners. 7/16 of those leases involve two of our elected officials and their families. These solar industrial plants will affect over 100 families within ½ mile of the site. Not one those that signed a lease will live in a home next to a solar plant. The solar project has divided a county, a neighborhood, families, and friends. However, it has inspired us as a community to protect the future of our farmland. I believe the moratorium would help to accomplish this for the generations to come.

Ms. Cheryl Ross spoke next. She stated Wabash County needed this moratorium because our community did not get to speak. NextEra came in and went to the farmers first, then to the Plan Commission. She stated she was involved in a meeting in October 2021, but the majority in the south area where this project is proposed to be did not realize until the company was present doing testing what was coming. She indicated the company has come in with lies. She stated she felt Wabash County was being treated as lab rats to see if the project would work due to our location and lines along the MISO grid. Other states, California, Texas, are having a lot of issues with solar. If you look up NextEra, you will find lawsuit after lawsuit. A moratorium could allow time for a committee to meet with community input. Together we can pull our community back together. We can do what is right is for our farm ground. Information is out there; we need time to gather it to pull this community back together.

Ms. Janet Lyons was next to speak. She stated she felt Wabash County really needs the moratorium in place. She cited information from a Michigan Plan Director discussing issues with drainage and concerns about the temperature of the run-off water from the solar panels. She is concerned what damage water of that temperature could do. She also indicated that she felt Wabash County needs to be looking at better ways to protect A2 ground also.

Ms. Carol spoke, stating the project would do irreparable damage to farm land and will never be returned to food production.

Mr. Chris Hickman spoke regarding sound levels. He asked if sound level is not an issue why did the company ask for a change. There will be noise produced by the inverters. If there is a BESS included in the project, that sound could be 24/7, not just when the sun shines. Sound will be produced by the panels as they are moved to track the sun. The construction phase will take 1-3 years and encompasses approximately 4 square miles. This will be 1-3 years of heavy equipment working, pile drivers, bull dozers, a minimum of 120 decibels. We don't know what their working hours would be during the construction process, 8, 10, 12 hours a day. We don't know. 40 decibels is considered a quiet neighborhood. They are proposing 55 decibels on an adjusted scale, which means it could go up to 75 decibels at any given point in time. A dishwasher is 55 -70 decibels. Freeway traffic is 70 decibels.

Mr. Campbell indicated that was all the speakers signed in to support a moratorium and no one signed in to speak opposed to moratorium. Mr. Rosen then asked the Plan Commission Board if they had any further questions or discussion. There being none, Mr. Rosen asked a motion to close the public hearing portion of the meeting. Motion was made by Mr. Milam, second by Ms. Slee. Roll call vote was taken, motion passed 6-0.

Mr. Rosen then asked the Plan Commission Board for a motion to make a favorable or non-favorable recommendation to the Commissioners regarding the moratorium. Mr. Rice made a motion to give a favorable recommendation to the Board of Commissioners for an ordinance imposing a temporary moratorium on the issuance of improvement location permits for commercial solar energy systems in an A1 zoning district pending amendment of the Wabash County Zoning Ordinance. Second was made by Ms. Slee. Roll call vote was taken, motion passed 6-0.

There being no further business to discuss at the special meeting, Mr. Rosen asked for a motion to adjourn. Ms. Lengel made the motion, second by Mr. Rice. Vote was taken, motion passed 6-0. Meeting adjourned at 7:21 p.m.

*Amanda Lyons  
Secretary, Wabash County Plan Commission Board*

*\*If any names are incorrect, spelled incorrectly, or omitted from the attendance in these minutes, we apologize.*

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