

## MINUTES OF THE KNOX COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION

August 13, 2024

**Call to order:** The August 13, 2024, meeting of the Knox County Planning Commission was called to order by Chairman Dean Wilken at 7:00 p.m. at the Knox County Courthouse Board of Supervisors meeting room.

**Announcement of Open Meeting Act:** Chairman Wilken announced where the Open Meetings Act is posted.

**Roll Call:** Members present: Jim Kotrous, Keith Nielsen, David Arens, Robert Ganz, Neil Clausen, Dean Wilken, Robert Larsen, Doug DeShazer, Greg Kuhlman Also present was Zoning Administrator Kelsy Jelinek, Steve Barney representing the Bloomfield Airport Authority, Matt Robinette, Kyle Alpers from Bluestem, David Levy and Hannes Zetzsche from Baird Holm and several members of the public.

### **Approve Agenda & Public Notice in the Verdigre Eagle and Bloomfield Monitor**

Kotrous moved, Larsen seconded to approve the agenda and public notice which was published in the Verdigre Eagle and Bloomfield Monitor. Roll call vote showed all present in favor Ayes: Jim Kotrous, Keith Nielsen, David Arens, Robert Ganz, Neil Clausen, Robert Larsen, Dean Wilken, Doug DeShazer, Greg Kuhlman

**Approve the Minutes from the July 9, 2024 Meeting.** Kotrous moved, Ganz seconded to approve the minutes from July 9, 2024 meeting. Roll call vote showed all present in favor Ayes: Jim Kotrous, Keith Nielsen, David Arens, Robert Ganz, Neil Clausen, Robert Larsen, Dean Wilken, Doug DeShazer, Greg Kuhlman

**Ex Parte Communications:** Jimmy Kotrous stated he's had a few calls regarding the solar project.

**Old Business:** None

### **New Business:**

1. Bloomfield Airport Authority Runway Extension approach project introduction by Steve Barney. The Bloomfield Airport Authority was granted \$1.5 million to expand their runway. 50:1 slope from 3-mile area to the 10 miles. At 10 miles it's about 1.5 miles wide and tapers back to the airport. Steve said this request is 100% a safety issue.

Public hearing was opened at 7:13 p.m. No Comments from the public. Public hearing was closed at 7:14 p.m.

Keith Nielsen moved, Jim Kotrous seconded to approve the application for rezoning by extending the airport hazard zoning from 3 miles to 10 miles based on the safety of pilots at the airport. Roll call vote showed all present in favor Ayes: Jim Kotrous, Keith Nielsen, David Arens, Robert Ganz, Neil Clausen, Robert Larsen, Dean Wilken, Doug DeShazer, Greg Kuhlman

2. Conditional Use Permit Application public hearing for Bluestem Verdigre Solar Project. Matt Robinette and Kyle Alpers presented the application for Bluestem's VRDG LLC solar project in western Knox County. Bluestem is based out of Omaha, NE. Two letters of support had been submitted to the zoning office and put on file with the planning commission. The solar project is estimated to power 80,000 homes. The planning commission asked questions of Matt regarding nameplate capacity taxes, noise, chemicals, longevity, coverage of acres, decommissioning funding and hail. Panels would take up approximately 15% of the acres leased. Fenceline is generally 12-15 ft. from the nearest row. Generally, 6 acres are estimated per megawatt. The VRDG LLC solar project would be the largest project Bluestem has been involved in to date, though they have other projects in operation in Nebraska and other states. There are no concrete foundations, only steel posts dug into the ground.

Public hearing was opened at 8:00 p.m. Public comments were made by Carl Dobias, Wendell Rohrer, Mike Miller, Katrina Burkhardt and Krista Podany. Public hearing was closed at 8:11 p.m.

Further discussion was had among the planning commission with questions being answered regarding health hazards, first come first serve basis on interconnection, roads agreements with the county and townships and possible bridge replacement if necessary.

Keith Nielsen moved, Robert Larsen seconded to recommend approval of the Conditional Use Permit application for VRDG LLC solar project based on the findings presented with conditions as presented with the alteration of the 24 months starting after the approval of the SPP. Roll call vote showed all present in favor Ayes: Keith Nielsen, David Arens, Robert Ganz, Neil Clausen, Robert Larsen, Doug DeShazer, Greg Kuhlman. Nays: Jimmy Kotrous, Dean Wilken

**Public Comments:**

**Zoning Administrator's Report:** The July Permit Report was reviewed.

**Next Meeting:** The next meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, September 10th at 7:30 p.m.

**Adjournment:** The meeting was adjourned at 8:38 by Chairman Wilken.

Kelsy Jelinek, Zoning Administrator

Approved by Planning Commission: 11/12/24

Placed on File with Board of Supervisors: 11/27/24