

The Peach Bottom Township **Planning Commission** met on **November 19, 2019** at 7:00 p.m. in the Municipal Office Building. Members present Frank Diamond (Chair), David Thompson (Vice Chair), David Stewart, Benjamin Hushon and Todd Steiner.

- **Motion** to accept the minutes as presented was made by Member Stewart and 2<sup>nd</sup> by Member Thompson, vote 4/0.

Member Steiner arrived

### Subdivision and Land Development Plans

Neumann & Roth – 297 Kilgore Rd, Map BP Parcel 10B, 29.77 acres

Land Development Plan for a farm hand dwelling.

Mr. Neumann provided an update. The goal is to produce organic products which is labor intensive, hence the need to convert to old alpaca barn into a farm hand dwelling. Septic testing for the conversion will be completed next week and a DEP Planning Module will need to be submitted. The correct dimensions of the barn are 24 x 36 feet. He has submitted an application for land development to the York County Agricultural Land Preservation Board. The project meets the development rights for both the Township and Land Preservation.

A Land Development Agreement allowing the use and default protection was reviewed.

- **Motion** to accept the agreement with the amended barn size was made by Member Thompson and 2<sup>nd</sup> by Member Stewart vote 5/0

### Ordinances

#### Solar Energy Systems

Member Diamond recommended allowing Solar Energy Systems as a Special Exception accessory use in the agricultural zone on land of low quality. The applicant can always appeal the soil quality.

Ironwood Renewable, LLC representative Hamilton Carrier, asked the Members if they had reviewed the West Manchester Township Solar Ordinance which would be more relevant to Peach Bottom Township than Lower Chanceford. Even if you allow it on good soil you would only have 3 or 4 solar farms in the Township, there is not enough yield in the substations.

Craig Metzler informed that they are preserving good farm land by doing something that can be removed. You will still have the farmland, not roadways and basements. The low quality soil requirement would shut off all solar, they cannot be built on the un-farmable ground.

Member Thompson stated that if you allow this use in the agricultural zone you have to allow anything else requested.

Member Diamond stated that the ordinances are written for the preservation of farm land.

You have the right to appeal the low quality soil to the Zoning Hearing Board.

Member Hushon' concern is that things change, it is difficult to know what is next. Possibly 4 Solar Energy Systems right now, but technology changes, we do not want to become an industrial center.

Mr. Carrier informed that in Massachusetts some towns limit the number of Solar Energy Projects allowed.

Member Diamond stated that they have compromised; it would be allowable on poor quality farm ground.

Craig Metzler inserted that you have created your ordinance so it cannot be done, without going through an extended process.

Mr. Langrehr noted that this is a better thing to do with your land, no chemicals or carbon foot print; we need to step lightly on the earth.

Sharon Kahl likes the limitation of number allowable in the Township and the amount of acres used per project.

Mr. Carrier informed that incentives are what are bringing this into the Township. Solar companies will be building for the next 3- 5 years then it will be done.

Member Thompson noted that the incentives could be extended.

Member Steiner informed that they are writing ordinances that will affect the Township for years. Allow solar on commercial land and if it works allow on agricultural land.

Member Stewart stated that we preserve our farms for agricultural use, by putting up a solar farm, which is a commercial use, what is to keep someone from coming in and requesting something else that is a commercial use, we could not stop it.

Member Steiner informed that the ground will even be commercially assessed and taxed.

Mr. Langrehr asked if any environmental impact studies have been done comparing solar to other uses.

Mr. Carrier replied that studies have been done that show the soil is the same if not better.

Member Steiner asked if the community project is installed, which is able to service 700 households and you haven't sold enough subscriptions where does the excess electricity go.

Mr. Carrier replied that you have to have 11 consumers for the project to be community solar and the electric goes on the electric grid.

House Bill 531 Modernizing Pennsylvania's Renewable Energy Standards was discussed.

Member Hushon asked what the maximum number of solar projects could be in the Township.

Mr. Carrier informed that it is between 4 and 6. The Township has 3 substations and only 2 projects can connect to each one. There are only about 20 parcels in the Township that are solar facility viable.

Member Hushon would consider allowing a limited number by special exception on class 1 & 2 farm ground. It's not about whether we are in favor or not it's trying to see what's coming in the next 30 years.

Craig Metzler asked that if the state is in favor of solar projects why Peach Bottom Township wants to be the only spot that will not allow any change in farming. Allow solar projects on agricultural land by special exception and let the people voice their opinions.

Sammy McConnell stated that the Members are looking ahead to what could happen and what they want to happen.

Member Thompson agrees with Member Stewart, we have to be careful.

The legality of putting a cap on the number of project allowable in the Township was discussed.

Chairman Diamond directed the members back to the attorney's memo.

- **Motion** to accept the wording corrections 1 through 6 was made by Member Diamond and 2<sup>nd</sup> by Member Steiner, vote 5/0.

In reference to the Lower Chanceford Township Solar Ordinance, it was noted that Peach Bottom does not have a conservation zone. The Residential zone was questioned; the Township has several large residentially zoned parcels.

The members informed that commercial and industrial land is available in the Township for a Solar Energy Project.

- **Motion** authorizing the attorney to incorporate the memo comments into the ordinance and present it at the next meeting, was made by Member Diamond and 2<sup>nd</sup> by Member Hushon, vote 4/0 Stewart abstained.
  
- **Motion** to adjourn at 8:10 p.m. was made by Member Hushon and 2<sup>nd</sup> by Member Thompson, vote 5/0.