

Brunswick County Planning Commission
Minutes
Tuesday, July 9, 2024
7:30 P.M.

Mr. Jay Warfel, Chairman, called the meeting to order. Mrs. Givens called the roll and a quorum was declared. The following members were present: **Josie M. Seward, Alonzo Seward, Leanne Fiorentino, Arnold Jones, Ella Ridley-Pierce, Ben Spence, Glenda Jackson Gilliam, Earl Jarrell, and Jay Warfel.** Members absent: **Stephen T. Bishop, Jr. and Jeanette Grimes.** Also present at the meeting were: **George E. Morrison, III, Director of Planning, Dawn P. Washburn, Planner, and Deborah K. Givens, Planning and Building Services Technician.**

The invocation was given by Rev. Alonzo Seward.

RE: Approval of Agenda

Mr. Morrison requested to add two items under Old Business. Item C. Zoning Authority Regarding Solar Panels and Item D. Highway 46 Scenic Byways Regarding Solar Panels. Upon a motion by Rev. Alonzo Seward, seconded by Mrs. Josie Seward, and unanimously carried the amended agenda was approved.

Ayes (9), Nays (0)

RE: Approval of Minutes

A. Joint Meeting Minutes of December 5, 2023

Mrs. Ella Ridley Pierce noted a few corrections. Upon a motion by Ms. Leanne Fiorentino, seconded by Rev. Earl Jarrell, and unanimously carried the amended minutes for the December 5, 2023 joint meeting were approved.

Ayes (9), Nays (0)

B. Minutes of March 12, 2024

Upon a motion by Rev. Earl Jarrell, seconded by Ms. Leanne Fiorentino, and unanimously carried the minutes for the March 12, 2024 meeting were approved as presented.

Ayes (9), Nays (0)

C. Minutes of April 9, 2024

Upon a motion by Rev. Alonzo Seward, seconded by Mrs. Glenda Jackson Gilliam, and unanimously carried the minutes for the April 9, 2024 meeting were approved as presented.

Ayes (9), Nays (0)

RE: Conditional Use Permit Case #24-013 – Submitted by River Street Communications of Virginia – Requesting approval to construct, operate, and maintain a public utility in the Agricultural (A-1) Zoning District

Mr. Morrison presented the Staff's Analysis and Recommendation. Mr. Doug Cox, an engineer with River Street presented his case. No one spoke in favor of or in opposition to the request. Chair Warfel closed the Public Hearing. After some discussion, Rev. Alonzo Seward motioned to recommend approval. The motion was seconded by Ms. Leanne Fiorentino, and unanimously carried, the Planning Commission voted to recommend approval of Conditional Use Permit Case #24-013 to the Brunswick County Board of Supervisors.

Conditions

1. Prior to the issuance of a zoning permit for the proposed public utility equipment building, the applicant shall submit a site plan for County approval in accordance with the provisions of Article 27 of the Brunswick County Zoning Ordinance.
2. The facility must meet all applicable Unified Statewide Building Codes for occupancy in this facility.
3. Accessory facilities associated with the public utility (equipment building) shall not include offices, vehicle storage, or outside storage. The Site Plan shall note this requirement.
4. If any disturbed area is 10,000 square feet or more, the applicant shall submit to the County for review and approval an Erosion and Sediment Control Plan in accordance with the provisions of the Brunswick County Erosion Control Ordinance and the Virginia Erosion and Sediment Control Handbook and Regulations. This approval includes the Permittee obtaining a Land Disturbing Permit from the County.

5. Any combination of landscape vegetative buffers or preservation of existing vegetation shall be provided around the perimeter of the site boundary of the public utility (equipment building) and associated accessory uses to effectively screen the view from the public right-of-way and adjacent property owners.
6. The permittees are required to conform with all terms and conditions of this permit, any and all rules and regulations of the Brunswick County Zoning Ordinance. The permittees' failure to do so will constitute a violation of the Brunswick County Zoning Ordinance, which in turn may result in the revocation of this conditional use permit.

Ayes (9), Nays (0)

RE: New Business

A. Upcoming Applications

Mr. Morrison informed the Commission that there were no upcoming applications.

RE: Old Business

A. Zoning Ordinance Update

A rough draft was received from the consultants and is being reviewed by staff. Staff is working on providing the changes to the consultants in order to be able to schedule community meetings and an eventual public hearing.

B. Solar Facilities Update

Mr. Morrison thanked everyone who attended the proposed Bright Leaf Solar Facility site visit that morning. Staff is working with the conditions of a couple of other projects. The County Attorney and the Board of Supervisors are also working on the siting agreements for those proposed projects.

Mr. Morrison informed the Commission that Greenville County decided not to approved the entire Monarch project in their county; however, Monarch is requesting for approval to hook to the transmission lines. The Greenville County Planning Commission public hearing is scheduled for July 2024 and the Board of Supervisors public hearing is scheduled for August 2024. The Brunswick County Board of Supervisors has approved the portion of the Monarch project located in Brunswick County.

Greenville County approved their portion of the Rocky Run solar project in their June 2024 Board of Supervisors meeting. The project name in Greenville County is County Line. Brunswick County staff is working with the conditions for the proposed Rocky Run project.

The application for the Zeus project is being reviewed by the Berkley Group.

Staff is still receiving inquiries from companies that are interested in developing a solar facility in Brunswick County. Staff informs them that the Board of Supervisors has approved a total of 8,600 acres of which 8,500 acres is designated for utility-scale and 100 acres is designated for cooperative-scale. The applications received by staff exceeds that allocation. The Bright Leaf developers are proposing two more solar facility projects named Corn Bread and Hushpuppy.

Once all the permits for the Monarch and Honeybee projects are approved, the County will receive \$1 million dollars from each project. The expected revenue the County will receive in a 30 to 35-year period is approximately \$60 million dollars for one project.

C. Zoning Authority Regarding Solar Panels

The Planning Commission voted in a pervious meeting to add language to the solar ordinance in regards to solar panels. The authority to add that language to the ordinance has been given by the General Assembly. Mr. Morrison informed the Commission that the information about the solar panels is mostly technical and about 120 pages total. Copies will be made available to the Commissioners. It will be discussed at the August 2024 meeting and may be added to the September 2024 agenda for a vote.

D. Highway 46 Scenic Byways Regarding Solar Panels

Mr. Morrison reminded the Commission that this issue was raised in a Planning Commission meeting that was held in October or November 2023. He has been researching this issue but has not been able to find any information that solar projects affect our scenic byways designation. He has contacted someone in charge of scenic byways and is waiting for a response. It will be added to the August 2024 agenda to update the Commission.

Mr. Morrison informed the Commission that there are three members that need to attend the Planning Commissioner Certification Program and this will have 100% of our commission certified. The program is offered virtually starting on September 12, 2024 and ending on November 22, 2024. He requested that the members inform staff as soon as possible to get registered. Internet service for the course can be provided in the office of the Planning Department upon request.

RE: Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned by general consensus.

Ayes (9), Nays (0)

Jay Warfel, Chairman

George E. Morrison, III, Secretary