



REDWOOD COUNTY ENVIRONMENTAL OFFICE

*Planning & Zoning • Parks & Trails • GIS
Aquatic Invasive Species • Septic Inspector
Drainage Inspector • Agricultural Inspector*

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REDWOOD COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION

MINUTES

Meeting Date: February 24, 2020

A meeting of the Redwood County Planning Commission convened on Monday, the 24th day of February, 2020, at the Redwood County Government Center.

The following members of the Redwood County Planning Commission were present: Mike Scheffler, Mark Madsen, Mike Kaufenberg, Jeff Huseby and Commissioner Jim Salfer. DeVonna Zeug was absent. Also present were the following individuals: Michelle Simms, Cullen Kobayashi, Ron Raddatz, Lloyd Panitzke, Loretta Panitzke, Brian Panitzke, Chris Dunsmore, Tony Rohs, Todd Geselius, Terrance Parris, Wayne Weber, Richard Green, Todd Schouvieller, Michael Peterson, Alan Plotz, Andy Plotz, and Land Use & Zoning Supervisor Nick Brozek.

At 1:00 p.m. the regularly scheduled February 24th, 2020 Redwood County Planning Commission meeting was called to order by Chair Madsen.

Chair Madsen had Brozek read aloud the rules and procedures of the meeting.

Kaufenberg nominated Mike Scheffler for Board Chair for the 2020 calendar year, with Jeff Huseby as the Vice-chair. The nomination was seconded by Salfer and passed unanimously. Madsen then handed the meeting over to Chair Scheffler.

At 1:05 p.m. Chair Scheffler called to order a public hearing on Conditional Use Permit #1-20, submitted by United States Solar Corporation.

Prior to the Planning Commission meeting, the Planning Commission members were provided an informational packet, which included the following information regarding the matter:

1. United States Solar Corporation is requesting to construct a community solar garden on 230th Street, near the intersection of that street and State Hwy 68, about 2.5 miles southeast of the City of Morgan. The property is owned by Todd & Candas Schouvieller. Todd Schouvieller signed off on the Conditional Use Permit application. US Solar has signed a long term lease for the site from the Schouviellers. The proposed site is located on the south side of 230th Street/County Hwy 72, immediately east of State Hwy 68, in the Northwest Quarter of Section 36, Morgan Township, parcel number 59-036-2020. The site is in the Agricultural District.
2. The facility will consist of a one (1) megawatt solar array on approximately 8.33 acres. The project will generate enough electricity to power about 225 homes and will be open for subscription by Xcel Energy customers.

3. Equipment to be installed includes solar panels, inverters, and single-axis tracker racking installed on piles or piers. The maximum height will be about 12’.
4. A 15’ wide unpaved access road will be constructed to serve the site from County Hwy 72/230th Street. A new road approach will be constructed for the access road. Temporary parking area and portable waste disposal containers will be provided during the construction phase. Two permanent parking spots will be provided for vegetation maintenance and other employees.
5. The ground underneath and between the solar panels will be seeded with a mix of pollinator-friendly, low-lying, deep-rooted plants. USS Steamboat Solar LLC will control for noxious weeds during the life of the project (25 years).
6. A farm-field style perimeter fence will be constructed around the solar array for security. The fence will not exceed 8 feet in height and will not use barbed wire.
7. A permanent infiltration basin will be constructed in the southeast end of the site to collect surface runoff water.
8. The location of the proposed solar garden is currently a tilled field. The existing surface water drainage pattern is that the surface water flows east toward Hwy 68 (and the proposed basin).
9. There is no county drainage tile on the project site. The closest public tile is located about 1000 feet south of the site. Additional county tile is located just over 1000 feet from the site, on the opposite side of State Hwy 68.
10. The site will be connected to the power grid via an existing Xcel distribution line located on the east side of Hwy 68.
11. The three nearest rural dwellings to the proposed solar garden are as follows: (1) Barry & Ann Weber, about 850 feet south of the site; (2) Scott & Michelle Phillips, about 1040 feet north of the site; and (3) a farm building site owned by Roger Jensen Disclaimer Trust, about 1400 feet southwest of the site.
12. This is the seventh solar garden application in Redwood County since 2015. Of the other six, one has been built and is operational (Jerry Huiras/Geronimo Energy) and two have expired and not been renewed (Sunshare – Green and Tauer sites), and three are under construction (Peterson, Green, and Hoffbeck). The Huiras site is a 3 MW site and the other sites are 1 MW each. The proposed project would raise the total permitted MW in the Xcel territory to 7 MW.
13. The applicant has submitted a decommissioning plan addressing the disposition of the facility should it cease to be used for twelve months or reach the end of its useful life. At that time, the system will be shut down and the panels, racking, poles, cables, posts, inverters, trans-formers, concrete pads, fencing, and access driveway will be removed and properly disposed of. The site will then be restored to its pre-installation status as an agricultural field.
14. A copy of the Conditional Use Permit application, maps, plans, and proposed permit conditions are enclosed.

Michelle Simms and Cullen Kobayashi were present at the meeting to explain the project. They made the following statements to the Commission:

- Simms and Kobayashi work for US Solar. The project is being developed under USS Steamboat Solar LLC.

- US Solar is a Minnesota Company that designs and develops solar gardens.
- The land on which the project is being developed is owned by Todd Schouvieller.
- The site will be accessed from Redwood County Highway 72.
- The site will be hooked into the electrical grid via the existing Xcel transmission line on the Northeast side of State Hwy 68, just east of the site.
- The energy produced will go to Xcel customers.
- The proposed solar site will be 8.3 acres in area when complete.
- The solar garden will be surrounded by a perimeter fence.
- The solar panels will be supported on steel I-beams driven into the ground. There will be no concrete footings or other concrete used in the construction.
- The solar panels will be affixed to steel racking, on single access trackers.
- The tracking mechanism will cause the total height of the panels to vary throughout the day, with a maximum height of 12'.
- It is 850 feet from the project site to the nearest residence.
- A decommissioning agreement has been signed between US Solar and the property owner requiring US Solar (the project owner) to decommission the site at the end of its useful life.
- Perennial, pollinator friendly plants will be planted on the site, which will improve soil quality.
- This project is very similar to the previous three solar garden site permitted in Redwood County by United States Solar Corporation.

The Planning Commissioners had the following comments and questions for the applicant:

- There are no footings at all?
- What is a “farm field style fence” described in the plans?
- How long will the solar garden continue to produce power?
- Are the proposed permit conditions ok?

The applicant responded to the Planning Commissioners’ comments and questions as follows:

- There are no concrete footings. The support beams will be driven 12’ into the ground.
- The fence will be rolled wire attached to wooden posts.
- The project has in interconnection agreement with Xcel Energy for 25 years. After that point, it is estimated that the site will still be producing at 80% capacity, and could try to enter into a new interconnection agreement.
- They agree with the proposed permit conditions.

Chair Scheffler asked if there was anyone present who wanted to speak in support of the project. The following individuals made statements:

- Todd Schouvieller made the following statements:
 - o Schouvieller owns the property where the project will be located. He bought the land after the previous owner had already signed the lease with US Solar, but Schouvieller knew about it at the time and supports the project.
 - o Schouvieller was originally told that the project would be located in the northeast corner of the property, on a triangle of the land that is on the opposite side of State Highway 68 from the larger part of the property. However, he found out that the project was moved to the northwest part of the property, only after receiving a copy of the Planning Commissioners packet from the Environmental Office prior to this hearing.
 - o Schouvieller prefers that the project be constructed in that triangle, so he doesn’t have to farm around it. The proposed project location in the northwest part of the property, plus the access road to be constructed, makes the field west of the project unfarmable.

Chair Scheffler then asked if anyone present wanted to speak in opposition to the project. No one came forward.

Simms and Kobayashi provided the following responses to the public comments:

- There is a county tile main running through the triangle of land on the northeast side of Hwy 68, which makes siting the project there difficult or impossible. Additionally, the soils are less suitable for the project in that area.

The Planning Commission asked whether the project could be reconfigured to be moved into the northwest corner, in the corner of the property at the intersection of the County Hwy 72 and Skyview Avenue. This would use the space more efficiently by not leaving any unfarmable land.

Kobayashi replied that the project has to be kept close to Hwy 68 for interconnection purposes, since the Xcel feeder line is on the opposite side. Also, they are not able to change the general layout of the site enough, due to the way the tracker equipment operates.

Chair Scheffler closed the public hearing at 1:35 p.m.

The Planning Commission discussed the findings of fact (attached to permit).

Madsen made a motion to recommend approval of permit #1-20, subject to the conditions recommended by staff, with two possible project locations – one in the northeast corner of the property and one in the northwest part of the property, subject to the applicant submitting a site plan for review and approval by the Redwood County Ditch Inspector.

Huseby seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

At 1:48 p.m. Chair Scheffler called to order a public hearing on Conditional Use Permit #2-20, submitted by United States Solar Corporation.

Prior to the Planning Commission meeting, the Planning Commission members were provided an informational packet, which included the following information regarding the matter:

1. United States Solar Corporation is requesting to construct a community solar garden on County Hwy 2, immediately north of the City of Morgan. The property is owned by Wayne Weber Revocable Trust. Wayne Weber signed off on the Conditional Use Permit application. US Solar has signed a long term lease for the site from Weber, as trustee of the trust. The proposed site is located on the east side of County Hwy 2, in the West Half of the Northwest Quarter of Section 15, Morgan Township, parcel number 59-015-2040. The site is in the Urban Expansion District.
2. The facility will consist of a one (1) megawatt solar array on approximately 7.8 acres. The project will generate enough electricity to power about 225 homes and will be open for subscription by Xcel Energy customers.
3. Equipment to be installed includes solar panels, inverters, and single-axis tracker racking installed on piles or piers. The maximum height will be about 12’.
4. A 15’ wide unpaved access road will be constructed to serve the site from County Hwy 2. A new road approach will be constructed for the access road. Temporary parking area and portable waste disposal containers will be provided during the construction phase. Two permanent parking spots will be provided for vegetation maintenance and other employees.

5. The ground underneath and between the solar panels will be seeded with a mix of pollinator-friendly, low-lying, deep-rooted plants. USS Steamboat Solar LLC will control for noxious weeds during the life of the project (25 years).
6. A farm-field style perimeter fence will be constructed around the solar array for security. The fence will not exceed 8 feet in height and will not use barbed wire.
7. A permanent infiltration basin will be constructed in the southwest end of the site to collect surface runoff water.
8. The location of the proposed solar garden is currently a tilled field. The existing surface water drainage pattern is that the surface water flows southwest toward the Verizon Wireless communications tower site, at 25607 County Hwy 2 (and the proposed basin).
9. There is county drainage tile located south and west of the project site. Branch 2, of Branch B, of Branch 16 of Judicial Ditch 17 is located about 150 feet south of the site. This 6" tile line runs west into Branch B of Branch 16, JD 17, a 12" main flowing north, about 100 feet west of the project site.
10. The site will be connected to the power grid via an existing Xcel distribution line located on the east side of County Hwy 2.
11. The three nearest rural dwellings to the proposed solar garden are as follows: (1) Cory Faulds, about 500 feet north of the site; (2) Wayne Weber, about 770 feet north of the site; and (3) Michael & Amy Heidemann, about 1100 feet east of the site. Additionally, the city limits of the City of Morgan are about 550 feet south of the project site, and the residences of Kamholz 1st Addition to the City of Morgan are about 625 feet (and further away) from the site. The Morgan football field is about 325 south of the site.
12. This is the eighth solar garden application in Redwood County since 2015. Of the other seven, one has been built and is operational (Jerry Huiras/Geronimo Energy) and two have expired and not been renewed (Sunshare – Green and Tauer sites), and three are under construction (Peterson, Green, and Hoffbeck). The seventh is the Schouvieller site references above. The Huiras site is a 3 MW site and the other sites are 1 MW each. The proposed project would raise the total permitted MW in the Xcel territory to 8 MW, provided the Schouvieller project is also approved.
13. The applicant has submitted a decommissioning plan addressing the disposition of the facility should it cease to be used for twelve months or reach the end of its useful life. At that time, the system will be shut down and the panels, racking, poles, cables, posts, inverters, trans-formers, concrete pads, fencing, and access driveway will be removed and properly disposed of. The site will then be restored to its pre-installation status as an agricultural field.
14. A copy of the Conditional Use Permit application, maps, plans, and proposed permit conditions are enclosed.

Michelle Simms and Cullen Kobayashi were present at the meeting to explain the project. They made the following statements to the Commission:

- This is a similar project to application #1-20, which the Planning Commission just considered.
- There is a similar tile line issue on this site – a 6" county tile runs through the property.
- The applicant originally planned to site the project north of the tile line, in order to meet the required building setback therefrom. However, working with the Redwood County Ditch Inspector, the new plan is to move the project to the south edge of the property, and move the tile around the north end of the project.

- The applicant submitted an updated site plan showing the new project location and the new proposed tile location.
- The solar garden will be interconnected on County Hwy 2, and will have an access road from County Hwy 2.

The Planning Commissioners had the following comments and questions for the applicant:

- Is this project the same as Schouvieller's solar garden project?

Simms and Kobayashi stated that the project is the same as Schouvieller, except for some details.

Chair Scheffler asked if there was anyone present who wanted to speak in support of the project. The following individuals made statements:

- Wayne Weber made the following statements:
 - o Weber is the owner of the land on which the project is proposed to be built.
 - o Weber has solar panels on his shop in Morgan and believes they are beneficial.
 - o The site was originally pitched to him as being on the south end of the property, but was moved because of the presence of the tile line. Weber prefers the southern site, because it won't create an obstacle for farming.
 - o Instead of moving the county tile, Weber would prefer to abandon the county tile. Weber has had the farm pattern-tiled. If the county tile is replaced on the north side of the site, all Weber's pattern tile runs will need to be hooked into it, every 60 feet.
 - o Weber prefers to abandon the county tile and have the neighbor to the east, who also uses the tile, run their water south to an existing 8" county tile main in the southwest corner of the neighbor's property, the runs through the city of Morgan and then into the same main as the 6" tile.
- Michael Petersen asked whether the Commission had enough information about the project to move forward.
- Ron Raddatz stated that the Commission should make sure to get everything written down word for word, because of his experience with a Kaolin clay pit near his property in a different part of the county.

Madsen stated that the City of Morgan has spent a large amount of money to get water out of town, where they have had many water and drainage issues, and he does not support a plan that routes additional water into Morgan.

Chair Scheffler then asked if anyone present wanted to speak in opposition to the project. No one came forward.

Chair Scheffler closed the public hearing at 2:29 p.m.

Madsen made a motion to table the hearing until April 6, 2020, or earlier by special hearing of the Planning Commission. Kaufenberg seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

At 2:30 p.m. Chair Scheffler called to order a public hearing on Conditional Use Permit #3-20, submitted by Southern Minnesota Beet Sugar Cooperative.

Prior to the Planning Commission meeting, the Planning Commission members were provided an informational packet, which included the following information regarding the matter:

1. The Southern Minnesota Beet Sugar Cooperative (SMBSC) is seeking to expand its existing beet piling facility, located on the north side of State Hwy 19, about 5 miles west of the City of Redwood Falls. The existing facility is on a 23-acre parcel in the southwest corner of Section 31, Delhi Township. For the

- Are the proposed conditions ok?

The applicant responded to the Planning Commissioners' comments and questions as follows:

- They have reviewed the proposed permit conditions and are fine with them.

Chair Scheffler asked if there was anyone present who wanted to speak in support of the project. The following individuals made statements:

- Mike Petersen stated that he supports the project. It will make storing beets more efficient.

Chair Scheffler then asked if anyone present wanted to speak in opposition to the project. No one came forward.

Chair Scheffler closed the public hearing at 2:40 p.m.

The Planning Commission discussed the findings of fact (attached to permit).

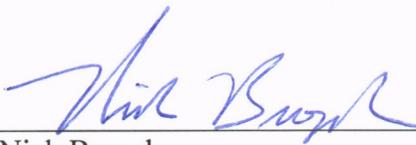
Huseby made a motion to recommend approval of permit #3-20, subject to the conditions recommended by staff, and the additional condition that the ponds be considered a potential future addition to the site.

Madsen seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Brozek noted that the next Board of Commissioners meeting will be on March 3, 2020. Brozek explained that he will present the Planning Commission's recommendation from this meeting to the Board of Commissioners at that time. However, Permit #1-20 would probably wait until March 17 to allow more time for the applicant to investigate the alternative project site.

The Commissioners reviewed and discussed the minutes from the December 30, 2019 Planning Commission meeting. On a motion by Madsen seconded by Kaufenberg the minutes from the December 30 Planning Commission meeting were unanimously approved as presented.

On a motion by Madsen, seconded by Huseby, the meeting was adjourned at 3:04 p.m.



Nick Brozek
Land Use & Zoning Supervisor
Redwood County Environmental Office



Mike Scheffler, Chair
Redwood County Planning Commission

expansion, SMBSC has purchased another 20-acre parcel from Lloyd and Loretta Panitzke just to the west of their current site. The new 20-acre piece is in the southeast corner of Section 36, Kintire Township.

2. The existing site is zoned I-1 Industrial, because at the time the beet piling facility was originally established, it was considered an industrial use under the zoning ordinance. Consequently, SMBSC was required both to rezone the property and apply for a Conditional Use Permit (CUP). However, pursuant to the recent ordinance codification and amendments, the use is now considered a commercial agricultural use, which is a conditional use in the agricultural district. Thus rezoning is not required for the expansion.
3. SMBSC plans to keep its existing beet piling slab facility as-is, and add a new facility immediately to the west. This facility will consist of a central 60' wide bituminous piling slab, running north to south, roughly down the center of the new 20-acre site, with clay-lined piling slabs on either side of the bituminous. The new site will be accessed from the existing site, using the existing road access from State Hwy 19. Two ponds will be excavated at the north end of the 20-acre site, to collect surface water run-off.
4. County drainage tile, part of JD 33, Lateral F, is present on the project site, and will need to be moved, or re-routed, so as not to impact drainage. This includes 10" Later 1 of Lateral F, which starts in the middle of the project area and flows north, where it connects with the main line of
5. Lateral F, flowing down from the north. Lateral F drains all or parts of properties in Section 36 and the south half of Section 25, Kintire Township. Lateral F outlets into JD 33 about ½ of a mile west of the project site.
6. The three nearest rural dwellings to the project site are as follows: (1) Lloyd & Loretta Panitzke, about 840 feet east of the site; (2) Jerome & Donna Lieble, about 3200 feet west of the site; and (3) a farm building site owned by Gordon Carity, about 3400 feet east of the site. These measurements are taken from the proposed expansion area, not from the existing piling slab facility.
7. A copy of the Conditional Use Permit application, maps, plans, and proposed permit conditions are enclosed.

Todd Geselius and Tony Rohs were present at the meeting to explain the project. They made the following statements to the Commission:

- Geselius and Rohs are working on behalf of Southern Minnesota Beet Sugar Cooperative (SMBSC).
- SMBSC is seeking to expand its existing beet stockpiling site on State Hwy 19.
- The expansion will be located on a new strip of land next to the current location.
- The extra space is needed because more beets are grown in this area than the current site can accommodate. This forces farmers to haul many loads of beets directly to the Renville processing site, or pile them in the field, neither of which is ideal.
- The expansion will allow storage of more beets, but also will allow SMBSC to shorten the height of the existing pile, which is better for storage because it allows the beets to cool faster, so there is less spoilage.
- The piling slab will consist of an asphalt slab down the center with two clay wing walls.
- Ponds are included on the design drawings, but these will not be installed unless the state or federal government someday requires them.
- There is county tile on the site and SMBSC is working with the County Ditch Inspector to move this tile.
- The expansion will not require any new access point from the road, it will use the existing access.
- A second scale will be installed on the site to improve traffic flow on the site.

The Planning Commissioners had the following comments and questions for the applicant:

- Should the conditions be amended to account for the ponds being a contingent feature only?