

Minutes of the Sparta Township Planning Commission
Special Meeting of July 1, 2019, 7 PM
Sparta Township Hall, Sparta MI

Present: Chairperson Terry Hartman; Township Clerk Marcy Savage;
Commissioners Linda Anderson, Tim Driscoll, Ken Humphreys,
and Mark VanderWerff
Also Present: Attorney Cliff Bloom, Township Supervisor Dale Bergman,
and Recording Secretary Toni Potes
Absent: Commissioner Don Doyle

I. / II. Call to Order / Pledge of Allegiance: Chairman Hartman called the meeting to order at 7 PM, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

III. Additions or Corrections to Agenda: None.

IV. Minutes of June 11, 2019: Motion by VanderWerff, second by Humphreys, to approve the Minutes. Motion carried unanimously.

V. Public Comment: None.

VI. Business Item

A. Michigan Apple Packers: Amendment to a prior special land use and site plan approval for outdoor solar panels: Sk Ayer, President and CEO of Ecojiva Solar Installation Company, referred the Commissioners to site plan Option 2 dated June 26, 2019, as the proposed plan. He reviewed the site plan and their June 27, 2019, 450 kW Ground Mount Solar array project narrative.

Plant Manager William Schweitzer explained locations for future building or parking grounds to the north on the plan, the reason why the panels are where they are on the plan.

Commissioner Humphreys would like to see a five-foot fence or something around the panels.

Dr. Joel Robertson appreciates petitioner's attempt to compromise. He provided pictures regarding wetlands. He is not seeing too much of a compromise by petitioner with regard to the neighborhood and wetlands.

Plant Manager Schweitzer stated clay tiles were put in in the 1970's, maybe earlier. It's a retention pond. The company did not add anything to it.

Rob Steffens of 4344 13 Mile Road stated the retention pond has never overflowed.

Plant Manager Schweitzer stated that this is Ag-1. People have a right to do what is allowed in Ag-1. The surrounding businesses and farmers rely on Michigan Apple Packers.

Rob Steffens suggested rather than a fence, how about some sort of barrier staggered to block the view, something nice planted along there. He doesn't see too many snowmobilers over there. A fence would look bad.

Dr. Robertson appreciates there's a planning commission, and it is important to oversee the image and property.

Attorney Bloom discussed the proposed Resolution. Please note this is a special meeting to accommodate the applicant—not waiting until the next regular meeting date. This proposal meets the draft ordinance on other things.

Jim VanderWilp, Plant Manager of Michigan Apple Packers Cooperative, Inc., discussed the original plan and moving the panels up on a hill, stating we've done everything asked of us.

Plant Manager Schweitzer is willing to put in shrubbery.

Rob Steffens stated they planted flowers, crabapples and pines for Dave in the past. They will put something in to make it look nice.

Ed Steffens had gone to the USDA office and found there are no wetlands on our property. It's all farmable. However, Commissioner Driscoll clarified that wetland surveys are only good for five years.

Attorney Bloom reviewed the proposed Resolution. Motion by Driscoll, second by Humphreys, to adopt the Resolution using the site plan dated June 26, 2019, and adding 3.E. to include a vegetative screen of evergreens that are compatible with the soil, beginning at the north edge of the west side of the 245'-panel area to extend a full 300 feet, placed 25 feet apart, two rolls staggered, and four-to-six feet in height when planted; these are to be replaced when dead or dying. Roll Call Vote taken: Humphreys—yes; VanderWerff—yes; Anderson—yes; Driscoll—yes; Hartman—yes; Savage—yes. Motion carried unanimously. Commissioner Savage requested of petitioner that next time, please ask the Planning Commission first.

VII. Adjournment: Motion by Anderson, second by Humphreys, to adjourn at 8:15 PM. Motion carried. The next regular meeting of the Sparta Township Planning Commission will be Tuesday, July 9, 2019, at 7 PM.

Respectfully submitted,
—Toni Potes
Recording Secretary