

MEETING MINUTES

Project: Solar Facilities Citizen Advisory Committee: Meeting 4	Meeting Date: November 2, 2017
Facilitator: Dan Carlson	Place/Room: Kittitas Valley Event Center

Committee Members in Attendance: Dick Carkner, Ivan Manley, Scott Downes, Andrea Sledge, Howard Lyman, Marlene Pfeifer, Steven England, Dave Nerpel, Jeff Dunning, Theo Leonard, Mary Christensen, Susie Weis

Committee Members Absent:

Staff Present: Dan Carlson (CDS), Chelsea Benner (CDS), Dusty Pilkington (CDS), Jeremy Johnston (CDS)

Meeting 2 Minutes: No comments or changes suggested

Review New Public Comments:

- Presentation by WSU regarding croplands and associated economics start on time, end on time
 - data related to agriculture economic reality in Kittitas County
 - A decline in livestock sales seemed to correspond with a decrease in overall economic production and eventually a leveling off between 1980 and 2000
 - Hay production has remained relatively stable. 40 to 50 thousand acres currently in hay production.
 - Volatility of agriculture is common throughout the state.
 - % of population involved in farming has decreased dramatically. Average age of farmer is 58 years old.
 - What options do farmers have to keep their farms? Even though demand for farm land is high, the cost often prevents expanding or investing in farmland for ag purposes.
 - This has created pressure on farmers to sell off land for other purposes.
 - Many support services are dependent on reliable farming.
 - 3 types of economic contributions of farming
 - i. Direct effects (labor)
 - ii. Indirect effects (business to business)
 - iii. Induced effects (Industry employees sending money earned into other sectors of the economy.
- Land production value averages
 - Irrigated cropland = \$214 an acre rent
 - Irrigated pasture = \$160 an acre to rent
 - Non irrigated pasture (rangeland)= \$29 an acre
 - Non irrigated land in crops = hard to calculate and rare
 - Generally land in the valley is more valuable than that outside
- Local economic considerations

- What is a valid basis for government constraints on private citizens use of their land
- Neighbor impacts
- highest and best use of lands (who should decide)
- What are opportunity costs of putting solar on prime Ag?
 - The multiplier effect impacts
 - Are commensurate returns on use levels actually equal?

Discussion of siting criteria and mapping

- Review of our mapping chronology and current map presentation
 - We should be less concerned with exact slope and within 3 miles of buffer. These factors should be ignored
 - If we make it too restrictive, developers can bypass the county with EFSEC.
 - Why should we consider any prime Ag land if enough other land is available?
 - The tiered system makes the costs increase for permitting in prime lands
 - Between state lands and non-irrigated land there is a huge inventory of available land that meets the developer criteria but does not endanger prime farm lands.
 - Do we agree that prime irrigated land should be the most restrictive tiers?
 - i. General agreement
 - Maybe we should focus on what those standards should be. Should there be difficult standards or outright prevention?
 - There is not as much land available as it seems because the state land development will be a difficult process. I am concerned about the impacts on the tier 1 non irrigated lands because they have intrinsic value as well.
 - We need to remember that the amount of installations possible are very small so even at peak capacity, regardless of where it is allowed, solar development will not impact the character of the county.
 - Concern voiced that drawing a hard line will severely impact whatever tier is least restrictive.
 - Does Tier 2 include range land?
 - Tier 2 follows red zones generally. Some of it could be rangeland.
 - good starting point is to establish the most restrictive tier criteria
 - Do we allow these uses in irrigated Ag lands at all?
 - Few say no they should not be allowed in Tier 4
 - There are 5 sites being considered right now in tier 4 areas. If those sites go through EFSEC, can we write into the regulations a threshold amount of solar allowed in that tier?
 - Discussion about policies and property rights implications. It might make sense to only allow tier 4 when other options aren't available. An alternatives analysis could accomplish that
 - Is it dangerous to draw red lines? Should we be more focused on mitigations?
 - How many people believe we should NOT allow commercial solar at all in tier 4?
 - i. 5 out of 12 raised hands
 - Majority believe they should be allowed in tier 4 but with strong regulations and standards.

- It seems we have a slim majority wishing for strict standards in tier 4 but not outright prohibition.
- We will be recording any voting and reasoning/commentary associated with it.

Begin review of draft regulations:

Staff presented preliminary set of regulations for analysis. We tried to incorporate comments and sample jurisdiction code to develop a base template to start the conversation.

- How would critical areas be addressed in tier 1 due to minimal notification requirements?
 - We will look into agency notification and comments for the development agreement.
 - i. May want to notify tribes as well to assess cultural issues.
- Should we have a limit in facility size in these tiers?
 - Comment: Didn't we decide earlier to look at the size differences separately?
 - We had discussed focusing on these separately in the more stringent tiers like 3 and 4
 - We may need to make purpose statements defining the categories without the regulatory language that can create loopholes.
- Discussion about the difference between administrative and regular conditional use permit and the reasoning for the difference in regulations which is to simplify the process for areas more desirable for solar locations.
- Some discussion regarding the differences between tiers and how we might adapt them to better reflect the differences.
- We can research that to get some answers, I am not sure it is applicable to land use code.
- Group consensus that terms need to be defined and clarified to avoid confusion
- Editable word copy will be sent out for committee members to review and make further changes to, these edited copies will be used to create next draft of code.

Public Comments:

- Don Chance: tension between public and property rights. Public rights need to be protected by local govt. allowing non Ag uses on prime lands doesn't make sense when public money is being used to expand and maintain these areas critical to the character. Also solar developers are not interested in prime land. They are looking for shrub habitat with no water rights.
Criteria comments: these projects will phase out. You must treat them like a mining application. Require bonding to ensure the counties interests.
Tax benefits should be established and know. Also solar notification should be above and beyond what is standard. A special notification requirement should be created to notify property owners within ¼ mile before SEPA is determined.
Visual impact analysis should be conducted for every project from many different angles.
- If the EFSEC projects are allowed what are the requirements? EFSEC will outline requirements which may require certain local permits.

- Once county regulations are established can developers still go through EFSEC? In some circumstances but we are not experts on EFSEC requirements.
- Brian from PSE describes some of the differences between EFSEC and County Processes.