

**AT A REGULAR MEETING OF THE ROCKBRIDGE COUNTY TOURISM
CORRIDOR REVIEW BOARD HELD IN THE COUNTY ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE
BUILDING, 150 SOUTH MAIN STREET, LEXINGTON, VIRGINIA, ON APRIL 7, 2021
AT 4:00 P.M.**

PRESENT: CHUCK BARGER, TIM WELSH, AND ROB MISH, AND
LEE MCLAUGHLIN, JR
ABSENT: JASON HARRIS
SECRETARY: CHRIS SLAYDON
STAFF:
OTHERS: CHRIS WISE, LEE MERRILL, PAT HASTINGS AND
DERK SHEEHAN

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Mr. Barger called the meeting to order at 4:02 p.m.

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The second agenda was citizen comments. There were none.

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The third agenda item was the review of the October 7, 2020 and the March 3, 2021 TCO meeting minutes. On a motion by Mr. Mish, seconded by Mr. Welsh, the TCO Board unanimously approved both sets of minutes.

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The fourth agenda item was the continued plan review for a 5 MW (AC) solar field south of the Village of Fairfield, on the westside of Route 11. Mr. Slaydon reviewed the details of the project and reviewed the status of the special exception application.

Mr. Hastings stated that at the last meeting, the TCO Board had requested photo simulations and additional information on the racking system for the panels. Mr. Hastings also stated that the amount of landscaping had been increased since the last meeting. Mr. Hastings reviewed the updated landscaping plan and the photo simulations.

Mr. Welsh stated that the photo simulations appeared to show the field as flat.

Mr. Hastings stated that the photo that was used was from google street view and then reviewed the photo without the solar array added. Mr. Hastings stated that it was difficult to show the rolling topography of the land.

Mr. McLaughlin asked about the height/age of the plants that were shown in the photo simulations. Mr. Hastings stated that the simulations depict the plantings at five or six years old.

Mr. Welsh asked about the height of the solar panels. Mr. Hastings stated that the arrays would be thirteen feet in height in the morning and would be approximately eight to nine feet high when the panels are flat.

Mr. Mish asked if Dynamic Energy had done other large scale solar projects along

interstates/highways. Mr. Hastings stated that one of the larger projects that Dynamic Energy had worked on was a 700 MW (AC) solar project along the Pennsylvania Turnpike.

Mr. Barger asked if there were additional photo simulations that showed the planting at full maturity. Mr. Hastings stated that they did not have photo simulations that showed the plantings at full maturity. Mr. Barger stated that he felt it would be beneficial to have the have photo simulations that showed the plantings at full maturity.

Mr. Sheehan reviewed the heights of some of the plantings at full maturity.

Mr. McLaughlin asked about the Eastern Red Cedars and if there had been any concerns expressed from the landowner associated with farming practices. He stated that they can provide a great screen, but can be problematic with farm fields. Mr. Slaydon stated that staff had discussed the potential issues with the applicant. Mr. Sheehan stated that the conflict can arise with the fields are not regularly maintained, and that because this was a crop field, he felt that to would reduce the concerns with the plantings.

Mr. Welsh asked about the dullness of the racking system. Mr. Hastings reviewed the photographs of similar racking systems that had been used in previous projects. Mr. McLaughlin stated that he felt that they appeared to have a dull finish and that overtime the racking system would become more of a battleship gray. Mr. Welsh stated that after viewing the pictures, considering the distance from Route 11, and the proposed landscaping, he felt that the proposed racking system would not be an issue. Other members on the Board agreed.

Mr. Welsh then asked about the options with the fencing. Mr. Hastings stated that most projects, approximately 90 to 95% of the projects they have worked on included a chain-link fence without barbwire. He stated that some have used a black vinyl coating on the fence. He then stated that the had done one project with a white vinyl fence, but maintenance of the white vinyl was problematic. Mr. McLaughlin agreed that white vinyl could be problematic, especially with the adjacent farming operation.

Mr. Wise asked if he could address the Board. Mr. Barger stated that Mr. Wise would address the Board. Mr. Wise suggested that the Board explore the possibility of relocation/additional plantings along Route 11 or closer to Route 11. He stated that due to the topography of the land that screening along the road could be more effective. Mr. Wise stated that he had discussed the modification with the applicant and the landowner.

Mr. Hastings stated that he had talked to the landowner and that they were willing to explore the possibility, but it would depend on the amount of land the landscaping would include. He stated that they would have to get the design team to develop the plan and present to the landowner.

Mr. Barger agreed that the relocation and/or additional planting alone the road could provide a better screen. Mr. McLaughlin stated that it may be beneficial in some areas, but he felt that there was not a lot of driving time from which the site can be viewed from Route 11.

Mr. Slaydon reviewed Section 611.03-8 of the County of Rockbridge Land Development Regulations and the timeframe that the TCO Board has to act on the pending application. He then asked Mr. Hastings if they were willing to extend the timeframe for the review. Mr. Hastings stated that they were willing to explore all possibilities to help bend the proposed site and improve the appearance of the proposed solar field. Mr. Hastings then reviewed the location of an existing powerline and reviewed the distances off of the powerline that the proposed plantings would be.

Mr. Slaydon then asked if the Board would like to continue the meeting until later in the month to allow the applicant to further explore the issue.

The Board agreed to continue the meeting until April 28, 2021 at 4:00pm at the same location in order to the applicant to develop a plan and further discuss the proposal with the landowner.

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The fifth agenda item was updates and administrative approvals. Mr. Slaydon updated the Board that the E Midland Trial sewer line upgrade and pumpstation was completed and in operation. Slaydon did not have any additional updates.

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With no further business to discuss, the meeting adjourned at 5:10 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Christopher T. Slaydon
Director of Planning