



## Calhoun County Planning Commission

June 26, 2023, at 4:00 p.m.

315 W. Green Street, Marshall, MI 49068

Garden Level Conference Room

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1. **The June 26, 2023, Calhoun County Planning Commission Meeting was called to order at 4:00PM by Vice-Chair Sackrider.**
2. **Roll Call** – called by Teri Zadigian  
Members present: Diane Thompson, Aaron Haynes, John Sackrider, Dan Livingston, Kelli Scott, and Jerry Johnson.  
Members excused: Ben Lark, Richard Porter.  
Staff in attendance: Jennifer Bomba, Community Development Director; Brittany Stein, Zoning Coordinator; Teri Zadigian, Administrative Assistant; and Brent Thelen, GIS Manager.
3. **Approval of Agenda**  
*Moved by Member Scott to approve June 26, 2023, Calhoun County Planning Commission agenda as presented, supported by Member Thompson.*  
On a voice vote, **Motion CARRIED.**
4. **Public Comments (limited to 3 minutes per participant)**  
Greg Moore and Moe El Gafy, representing Consumer's Energy, expressed their concern regarding the Bedford Charter Township Zoning Text Amendment re: Solar Energy Systems. Consumers Energy is not looking for favorable ordinances on their behalf, instead what stands out and is it to protect the public. Setbacks are important to effectively utilize the land. The proposed setback, along with the proposed berms with twelve-foot trees, are of concern. Is this to protect the public or to prevent a solar farm from existing. When the Calhoun County Planning Commission reviews the Bedford Charter Township Solar Energy Systems proposed ordinance, compare with other communities with solar ordinances, to get a broader view before making a recommendation.  
  
**Approval of May 22, 2023, Minutes**  
*Moved by Member Livingston to approve May 22, 2023, meeting minutes as presented, supported by Member Thompson.*  
On a voice vote, **Motion CARRIED.**
5. **Communication**
  - a. Proposed Bedford Twp Solar Ordinance Text Amendment, Consumers Energy, June 13, 2023  
Ms. Bomba indicated that the letter shared as Communication was received from Consumers Energy in relation to Agenda Item 6a. The letter summarizes Consumers Energy's concerns with the proposed zoning regulations for solar energy systems.
  - b. Any other Communication to come before the Commission  
There was none.
6. **Old Business**
  - a. Any Old Business to come before the Commission  
There was none.
7. **New Business**
  - a. Any other New Business to Come before the Commission  
There was none.

## 8. Township Planning & Zoning Coordination

### a. 6-23-01, Bedford Charter Township: Zoning Text Amendment re: Solar Energy Systems

In 2019, Bedford Charter Township adopted ordinance regulations for private solar energy systems as a permitted use in all districts and commercial energy systems as a conditional use in the Agricultural and Industrial zoning districts.

At their May 23, 2023, meeting, the Bedford Charter Township Planning Commission made a recommendation to amend the Solar Energy Systems regulations of the Township Zoning Ordinance. Significant changes and updates were reviewed and recommended.

Planning and Zoning for Solar Energy Systems: A Guide for Local Governments in Michigan was developed by experts from Michigan State University School of Planning, Design and Construction in partnership with faculty at the University of Michigan Graham Sustainability Institute. This guidebook was developed to help Michigan communities meet the challenge of becoming solar-ready by addressing development standards within their planning policies and zoning regulations. It speaks to different scales of solar development and provides recommendations for best management practices. The proposed request to amend the Solar Energy Systems section within the Zoning Ordinance is far more restrictive than the suggested standards within the guidebook. With careful review and consideration, the Community Development staff recommend the Bedford Charter Township Board deny the proposed text amendment, as presented, and request that the Township Planning Commission review and consider providing a more inclusive Solar Energy Systems Zoning Ordinance.

*Moved by Member Scott to recommend disapproval of Bedford Charter Township Zoning Text Amendment re: Solar Energy Systems, Supported by Member Thompson.*

On a voice vote, **Motion CARRIED.**

### b. 6-23-02, Burlington Township: PA 116 Application re: Floyd and Linda Worden

Application for Farmland Agreement (PA 116) has been submitted by Floyd and Linda Worden for property located in Section 23 of Burlington Township, Parcel ID# 13-05-123-015-00. The application consists of approximately 76 acres total, with 58 under cultivation. There are three (3) structures on the property; 1 residence, 1 barn, and 1 garage.

The subject parcel is zoned by Burlington Township as Agricultural. The Burlington Township Future Land Use Plan classifies the property as Agriculture as does the Calhoun County Master Plan. The property owner has requested a 90-year contract for this application.

Community Development staff believe that the Application for Farmland Agreement submitted by Floyd and Linda Worden is valid and recommends for approval by the Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development.

*Moved by Member Livingston to recommend approval of the PA 116 Application submitted by Floyd and Linda Worden, supported by Member Scott.*

On a voice vote, **Motion CARRIED.**

### c. 6-23-03, Homer Township: PA 116 Application re: Jeffrey Taylor

Multiple applications for Farmland Agreement (PA 116) has been submitted by Jeffrey Taylor for property located in Homer Township. Each application is outlined below.

Property ID	Section	Acres	Use	Buildings	Contract
13-12-050-003-00	5	80	51 acres cultivated	1 - residence	90 years
13-12-040-024-00	4	6			
13-12-050-030-00	5	34	34 acres cultivated	0	90 years
13-12-051-003-01	5	6	30 acres cultivated	0	90 years
13-43-040-005-00	Vlg	26			

The subject property is zoned by Homer Township as Agricultural. The Homer Township Future Land Use Plan classifies the property as Agriculture as does the Calhoun County Master Plan. The property owner has requested a 90-year contract for each application.

Community Development staff believe that the Application for Farmland Agreement submitted by Jeffrey Taylor is valid and recommends for approval by the Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development.

*Moved by Member Thompson to recommend approval of the PA 116 Application submitted by Jeffrey Taylor, supported by Member Livingston.*

On a voice vote, **Motion CARRIED.**

- d. 6-23-04, Leroy Township: Zoning Map Amendment re: ID# 13-14-020-012-00 from MDR to AA  
The Leroy Township Planning Commission has received a request to amend the zoning classification for a parcel located in Section 2 of Leroy Township, specifically parcel ID #14-020-012-00. The subject property is approximately 74 acres and currently zoned as Medium Density Residential. The request is to rezone the property to Agriculture.

The surrounding zoning consists of Medium Density Residential to the north, south and east and Low Density Residential to the west. The subject property is currently vacant land and being cultivated for agriculture purposes.

The Leroy Township Future Land Use Map designates the subject property as a combination of Neighborhood Commercial (northern portion) and Medium Density Residential (southern). Adjacent property is designated as Neighborhood Commercial to the north, Medium Density Residential to the south, Medium Density Residential and Neighborhood Commercial to the east, and Low Density Residential to the west.

Community Development staff understand that the use of the subject property for agricultural purposes does not comply with the list of permitted or conditional uses within the Medium Density Residential zoning district and exists as a non-conforming use. However, the vision established by the Leroy Township Future Land Use Plan indicates a future use for this property as commercial and/or residential. Therefore, Community Development staff recommend for disapproval of the request for rezone by the Leroy Township Board and continue to address the agricultural use as a non-conforming use.

*Moved by Member Scott to recommend disapproval of Leroy Township Zoning Map Amendment re: ID# 13-14-020-012-00 from MDR to AA, Supported by Member Thompson.*

On a voice vote, **Motion CARRIED.**

- e. Any other Planning & Zoning Coordination to come before the Commission  
There was none.

## 9. Department Report

Brent Thelen, GIS Manager, presented a map depicting Calhoun County parcels entered in a PA 116 contract as of 2019. With updated information from MDARD this map could be a useful tool in making land use decisions. Discussion continued on the limitations of the data.

Ms. Bomba stated that Convis Township has approved a contract with the County to provide planning services. As Community Development does work in the townships, it might be presented to the CCPC for review. Currently, legal council is assisting on this matter.

Ms. Stein attended the Michigan Association of Planning Solar and Wind Tour in May. The tour consisted of a facility owned by Consumers Energy in Hillsdale County, which is a wind farm, and Convis and Pennfield Township developments owned by Invenergy, which are solar farms. It was educational to be on site, next to solar panels

and inverters, to witness the size of these developments. It was not difficult to communicate with others, noise was not an issue. The tour extended into Coldwater and Sturgis and each solar farm was different from the next. The impacts from a wind farm to a solar farm are very different. Wind farms can be farmed right up to the base of the windmill, but has visual challenges, as solar farms utilize more land, but do not take up air space.

**10. Member Comments**

Member Livingston thanked Ms. Stein for digesting the information and presenting it to the committee so he can make an informed decision.

Member Thompson expressed interest regarding future solar/wind tours.

**11. Public Comments (limited to 3 minutes per participant)**

Lynn Sleight stated: Disappointed that Bedford Charter Township was not represented today. It seems that Bedford Township is highly concerned about having solar farms in their community. Be respectful to Bedford Township regarding their proposed buffers on solar farms and wetlands.

Mr. Moore stated if anyone is interested in a solar/wind tour, to contact him and he will schedule a tour.

Ms. Emersen-Rich commented on the importance of having green space and trees in and around solar/wind farms for animals and oxygen. Also, to have buffers around wetlands due to the loss because of climate change. Ms. Emersen-Rich also inquired if the planning committee, along with other county committees, could use the commissioner board chambers to live stream meetings for those unable to attend.

**12. Announcements**

The next Calhoun County Planning Commission meeting is scheduled for July 24, 2023, at 4:00 p.m.

**13. Adjournment 5:04pm**