

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION OF THE CITY OF SODA SPRINGS, CARIBOU COUNTY, IDAHO HELD JUNE 9, 2020.

ROLL CALL SHOWED THE FOLLOWING PRESENT:

Charles Fryar–Chairman
Rod Worthington-Vice Chairman
Drew Erickson
Demian Guthmiller
Robert Johnson

EXCUSED:

Alan Skinner, City Director
Lori Anne Lau
Tysen Hopkins

ALSO PRESENT:

Jon Goode, Councilmember
Gregg Haney, City Attorney
Andrea Haderlie, Secretary

Due to the threat of COVID-19 and physical distancing, limiting the number of people (9 or less) for public gatherings, the Planning and Zoning Meeting and Public Hearing were held by conference call.

6:05 PM Chairman Fryar called the meeting to order. Commissioner Erickson moved to dispense with the reading of the May 19, 2020 minutes and to approve the minutes as written. Commissioner Johnson seconded the motion. All in favor, motion carried. Chairman Fryar welcomed new Planning & Zoning Commissioner Robert Johnson.

Commissioner Johnson presented his conversation to the Commission with Charles Titcomb, from Grace, about his solar panels. Commissioner Johnson stated solar panels can be set up as a stand-alone unit or net-metering. Net-metering requires a meter that reads both ways. It measures the amount of electricity that flows from the power company into the house and the excess electricity from the solar panels back to the power company. It is a micro-inverter system where each panel acts independently and can be tracked on the internet. It shows the amount of power each one produces and how that power is consumed, whether it is used by the property owner or sent to the power company. Commissioner Johnson mentioned there are many permits and requirements that have to be satisfied, but the certified installer takes care of them. Hooking to the “grid” is the biggest concern as the owner’s system can’t harm or jeopardize the grid in any way. The people who install them are required to be certified if they are connected to the grid through net-metering, or to get a tax break. The tax break is approximately 30%. Big Dog Solar Power in Pocatello is an example of a certified company. Companies like Big Dog keep the cost as low as possible so people can pay for them using monthly payments over a number of years. Commissioner Johnson also mentioned a person may install them on their own if it is a standalone power source, such as for a cabin in a remote area. However, the owner won’t get a tax break unless they are installed by a certified company. He explained a battery is not required

for net metering, but they are needed for standalone units. The batteries are very expensive and have certain storage requirements. Solar panels do not produce glare or noise. Mr. Titcomb also mentioned to Commissioner Johnson, Grace planning and zoning is not involved with solar installations because they have not put into place any requirements. No approvals, permits or easements were required from the City of Grace. The City of Grace does not do inspections before operation because the certified installer takes care of that. There is almost no maintenance or upkeep. The panels are warrantied for 30 years and any work on them has to be done by the certified installer. The installer takes care of any maintenance if needed. Commissioner Johnson also mentioned two dozen panels will create just enough power to offset the 20-year monthly payment and the electric portion of the monthly utility bill. Therefore it takes about 20 years to recoup the cost of purchase and installation. Mr. Titcomb mentioned to Commissioner Johnson they still work with snow on them. However, the deeper the snow, the less effective they are. The snow seems to easily melt off of them. Preferences on roof slope are 1.South 2.West 3.East and North is not a consideration. Commissioner Johnson mentioned Mr. Titcomb's recommendations for considering ordinances regarding solar panels may be:

- Regulating planting of trees that may someday impede the effectiveness of neighbor's solar panels
- Regulating the construction of 2-story structures that may impede of the effectiveness of neighbors solar panels
- Aesthetics (from the street view) of solar panels on south facing homes

Commissioner Johnson forwarded the information to the Commission for their review. Commissioner Erickson suggested doing a case by case review before the Planning and Zoning Commission. The Commission discussed at length the need for a Solar Panel Ordinance, property rights of home owners and property value, the costs for a Solar Panel Systems, buy back of the power produced, trees causing shade over the solar panels, and new construction. The Commission also discussed maintenance and negative returns.

After much discussion the Commission agreed to not move forward with the Solar Panel Ordinance. Vice Chairman Worthington motioned to table the Solar Panel Ordinance until a further date. Commissioner Erickson seconded the motion. All in favor, motion carried. Vice Chairman Worthington also commended Attorney Haney, Director Skinner and Commissioner Johnson for the research they all have brought forth to the Commission about Solar Panel Ordinances and Solar Panel Systems. Councilmember Goode shared an article from the Idaho Public Utilities Commission about solar on site generation to match nearly 100% of a home's energy use to the Commission for their review.

7:00 PM Commissioner Erickson motioned to adjourn the meeting. Commissioner Guthmiller seconded the motion. All in favor, motion carried.