

Commissioner Walker moved to approve these minutes on March 11th, 2021.  
Motion was second by Commissioner Seabrooks. Minutes were approved by all.

Jefferson County Planning Commission  
Meeting Minutes  
February 25, 2021

Chairman Bud Wheeler called to order at 6:00 pm.

Commissioner Roy Faglie led the group in an opening prayer and the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.

Physically in attendance: Commissioner Bud Wheeler, Commissioner Roy Faglie, Commissioner John Floyd Walker, Commissioner Jacqueline Seabrooks, Commissioner Michael Schwier, Commissioner Byron Arceneaux, Commissioner Thomas Chancy, Planning Attorney Scott Shirley, Planning Official and Interim County Coordinator Shannon Metty.

Attended via Zoom: Commissioner Derrick Jennings and Commissioner Andrew Wellman.

Commissioner Wheeler allowed those present at the podium to remove face covers so that the commissioners and public could better hear and understand the presentations.

Agenda Item #2: Approval of Draft Minutes-July 23, 2020 Meeting:

- Chairman Wheeler asked for a review of the Minutes for the July 23, 2020 meeting. Commissioner Schwier motioned that the minutes be approved as submitted. Commissioner Chancy second the motion. Motion passed with unanimous approval.

Agenda Item #3: Special Exception and Major Development of Large-Scale Solar Facility:

- Mrs. Metty opened the discussion with a brief introduction of the project.
- Mr. Phillip Martin (joined via Zoom) presented a PowerPoint containing the company background, benefits of solar energy, overview of the Drifton PV1 Facility and site plan, as well as project goals. Once completed Mr. Martin turned the discussion over to Mrs. Megan Dempsey (physically present) attorney for EcoPlexus.
- Mrs. Dempsey expressed that the application was filed on November 6<sup>th</sup>, 2020 and was available to answer any questions or concerns the Commissioners or the Public may have. She submitted a PowerPoint and appraisal to the Commissioners.
- General Discussion:
  - Commissioner Arceneaux questioned the storm water impacts and stated that nothing was presented regarding this. Commissioner Schwier agreed that it would have been appreciated to see this information in the PowerPoint. Mr. Martin rebutted saying the site will meet all requirements and the company will work with DEP to ensure all guidelines are met.
  - Commissioner Faglie questioned the use of perimeter fencing. Mr. Martin rebutted saying based on other similar projects they plan to use an 8ft Deer-Buster Fence with galvanized posts. He stated that there will be various wildlife openings.

He expressed that the Deer-Buster fencing was accommodating for large and small animals to pass through.

- Commissioner Faglie questioned how many entrances are proposed. Mr. Martin explained that there are currently two entrances, one at the East end of Drifton Highway and the other at the West end of Drifton Highway.
- Commissioner Faglie questioned if Ecoplexus has been involved in any similar projects in the South Georgia, North Florida, South Alabama area. Mr. Martin stated that they have had two projects in South Florida but nothing in North Florida and are not involved in the projects to the East.
- Commissioner Faglie questioned how many employees will be employed by this? Representative replied that one person will be employed.
- Comments from the Public:
  - Resident Michelle Arceneaux expressed multiple concerns with the project application stating she felt it was not a complete application. She presented the Commissioners with a list of items which she felt should have been included in the initial application and felt that the Commissioners should not move forward with this project.
  - Resident Mary Marr states that she has no issues concerning the project, but she does have concern with storm water. She stated that her land, like many others in the proposed area, is mostly considered wetland property and has constant drainage issues. She urges the Planning Commission to set a standard with this project so that there are no issues in the future with plans of similar projects.
  - Resident Mary Howard also expressed concern with the storm draining. She feels that if not addressed now in the project plans that it would make her current situation (and fellow neighbors) worse as they are in the low-lying areas.
  - Resident Carla Wheeler expressed her feelings of an incomplete application and felt it would be unfair to allow the applicant to complete something that has already been submitted as she was not allowed any “wobble room” for required items.
  - Attorney Mrs. Dempsey rebutted the points that Mrs. Arceneaux expressed and felt that the application was complete based on consultation with County staff. She feels that all expectations were met and based on recent solar ordinances their application was compliant.
- Attorney Mr. Shirley asked the Committee for a 5-minute recess, Commissioner Wheeler allowed-6:45pm. At 6:50pm, the Committee re-adjourned.
- General Discussion Continued:
  - Commissioner Arceneaux questioned the legitimacy of the application and why the Planning Commission was even considering approving such an incomplete packet. He moved to deny the application based on the lack of information provided.
  - Attorney Mr. Shirley expressed concern with denying the application and stated that he felt there was some pre-application confusion on the format. He

suggested to the Committee that the topic be tabled until the applicant has time to review and complete the application based on code requirements.

- Commissioner Schwier motioned to table this item until the applicant has had time to review and complete the application. Commissioner Faglie and Seabrooks second motion.

#### Agenda Item #4: Special Exception for an Events/Wedding Venue:

- Mrs. Metty opened the discussion with a brief introduction of the project. She explained that the initial application did not express the detail of what the venue has been used for. She was led to believe that it was a church and church related events, over time it has come to light that this is indeed an Events/Wedding Venue.
- Mr. Winchester (physically present) presented a history of his organization and how the property and business has grown over time. He stated that numerous renovations and property improvements have been made. He expressed he has met with Mrs. Gray's office (Property Appraiser) and he has since taken care of all the back due taxes on the property. He also stated he has addressed a septic issue and now has to get a permit to have the septic system upgraded. He said he is willing to do whatever it takes to be compliant with the County.
- General Discussion:
  - Commissioner Wheeler questioned if the Health Department was satisfied with the septic adjustments. Mr. Winchester replied saying he has to add an additional drain field.
  - Planning Official Metty added that the initial barn was built as an Ag-barn and did not require permitting. The barn has since been fully renovated and enclosed and was all done without being permitted.
  - Commissioner Schwier asked was this a Wedding venue? Mr. Winchester explained that it was not initially but has since become one for the most part.
  - Commissioner Arceneaux mentioned the noise issue and asked the Committee how that would be best addressed. Attorney Mr. Shirley reviewed the noise ordinances for Special Exceptions. Mrs. Metty added that the Sheriff's Department does have noise decibel readers.
  - Commissioner Wheeler asked at this moment was there a noise ordinance? Attorney Mr. Shirley answered that at this time there is not one, but should Mr. Winchester become a permitted business with the County then he would have to abide by the County regulations.
  - Commissioner Schwier states that he has problems with this entire application as it seems "we are only here because Mr. Winchester got caught."
  - Commissioner Seabrooks asked the Committee was this issue similar to that of the previous meeting. Attorney Mr. Shirley said this is different because that was a temporary use permit, and this is a permit event venue.
  - Commissioner Faglie stated that he feels the amplified noise seems to be the main issue and feels that needs to be reviewed during the upcoming noise ordinance discussions.

- Comments from them Public:
  - Resident Pamela Ray (neighbor) thanked Mrs. Metty for the notice of the meeting. States that she admires entrepreneurs and welcomes new businesses to our County however had she known that an event venue of this magnitude was next to the property she purchased they would not have moved to that location. She states that the noise is “too much and continues well into the night.” She expressed concerns for the affect this will have on her property values.
  - Resident Mark Oglesby (neighbor) believes in the Winchester project but feels a mitigation process should be enforced if the project stays as the noise is excessive and unacceptable.
  - Resident Pedro Masada states and provided recordings of the noise from the event held over the weekend. He states these recordings were from two properties away and were recorded at 8:59pm.
- General Discussion Continued:
  - Attorney Mr. Shirley suggested that this topic be continued until the following Planning Commission meeting. He feels that by doing this it will allow the neighbors time to meet with Mr. Winchester and come to agreeable terms as to what they will accept. Attorney Mr. Shirley also feels that by continuing this topic it will allow the County time to review the ordinances and how to proceed.
  - Attorney Mr. Shirley suggested for this to be continued at the March 11<sup>th</sup>, 2021 meeting. Commissioner Faglie moved to motion. Commissioner Walker second motion. Motion passed with 8-1 vote.

Commissioner Wheeler thanked everyone in attendance.

Commissioner Walker motioned to adjourn.

Mrs. Metty brought to the Commissioner attention that a noise ordinance is set on the docket for the next meeting and packets will be in the mail.

Adjourned meeting at 7:45pm.

Respectfully submitted,

*Renee' Long*

Renee Long  
Jefferson County Planning Assistant