

**Planning Commission  
November 2, 2015**

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Pursuant to due call and notice thereof, a Planning Commission meeting was held on November 2, 2015 6:30 p.m. at Sartell City Hall.

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Glenn Persen, Anna Gruber, Dawn Moen, Ryan Fitzthum, Gary Orman

**MEMBERS ABSENT:** None.

**OTHERS PRESENT:** Mike Nielson, City Engineer  
Anita Rasmussen, Community Development Director

Orman called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.

**AGENDA REVIEW AND ADOPTION**

Orman requested that staff provide an update on the research that was to be generated on property maintenance under old business.

**A MOTION WAS MADE BY FITZTHUM TO AMEND THE AGENDA TO INCLUDE AN UPDATE ON COMMERCIAL PROPERTY MAINTENANCE. THE MOTION WAS SECONDED BY PERSEN. UPON VOTE BEING TAKEN THE FOLLOWING VOTED:**

**AYE: PERSEN, MOEN, FITZTHUM, ORMAN, GRUBER**

**NAY: NONE**

**MOTION CARRIED**

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

**A MOTION WAS MADE BY PERSEN TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE SEPTEMBER 8TH MEETING. THE MOTION WAS SECONDED BY FITZTHUM. UPON VOTE BEING TAKEN THE FOLLOWING VOTED:**

**AYE: PERSEN, MOEN, GRUBER, FITZTHUM, ORMAN**

**NAY: NONE**

**MOTION CARRIED**

**A MOTION WAS MADE BY MOEN TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE AUGUST 24<sup>TH</sup> MEETING PENDING CORRECTIONS. THE MOTION WAS SECONDED BY FITZTHUM. UPON VOTE BEING TAKEN THE FOLLOWING VOTED:**

**AYE: PERSEN, GRUBER, ORMAN, MOEN, FITZTHUM**

**NAY: NONE**

**MOTION CARRIED**

**NEW BUSINESS**

**CUP REQUEST – SOLAR GARDEN SOLAR STONE**

Sartell Holdco, LLC is proposing to develop a five MW solar garden facility in conjunction with the Minnesota Community Solar Garden Project. This type of commercial utility service structure is intended to serve users and uses in the surrounding area (10-7A-3, Sartell City Code) are a permitted conditional

use within an I-1 zone. Conditional uses are permitted uses within a zoning district and may have reasonable conditions attached for approval.

The proposed location for the solar garden is south of the Sartell Heights Park and west of the Meadow Lake development and within three decommissioned waste water treatment lagoons (two are owned by the City of Sartell, and SPX owns the third). The proposed solar garden area consists of approximately 49 acres. The solar panels will be set back at least 100 feet from the west (Meadow Lake), 40 feet from the east and 15-60 feet from the northerly and southerly property lines. The maximum height of the panel will be 15 feet (at full tilt), but the panels are proposed to be set within the existing bermed area already established for the existing lagoons.

Staff recommends approving the Conditional Use Permit request and Findings of Fact with the following conditions:

1. That per the decommissioning plan, the owner/operator shall remove the equipment and facilities at the end of the project life or after their useful life. The owner or operator shall decommission the solar panels in the event they are not in use for twelve (12) consecutive months. The plan shall include provisions for the removal of all structures and foundations, all electrical transmission components, the restoration of soil and vegetation and a soundly-based plan ensuring financial resources will be available to decommission fully the site. The disposal of structures and/or foundations shall meet the requirements of all local, state and federal ordinances and laws.
2. That the solar garden be limited to a maximum output of 5 MW and that the site will not exceed 50 acres in size.
3. That all on-site power and communication lines are running between the banks of the solar panels, buildings shall be buried underground on premise. All power and communication lines running to the site shall also be buried underground. The City Council may consider an exception through an amendment to the conditional use permit in instances where shallow bedrock, water courses or other elements of the natural landscape interfere with the ability to bury lines.
4. The solar garden and units shall be compliance with all building, State Electric, Plumbing and Energy Codes.
5. All security and equipment buildings on the site of the solar garden shall be permitted uses accessory to the solar garden.
6. The existing lagoon berming shall suffice as appropriate screening as so long as the panels are placed within the interior of the berms, with no more than 2-3 feet of the panels (at full tilt) being exposed. The City has the right to re-evaluate this condition on a yearly basis and staff would have the authority to require additional low-lying screening, shrubbery or other native vegetation if it was determined by staff, that the existing screening is inadequate.
7. As it currently exists on the site, no additional features or structures will be constructed which would eliminate the ability for wildlife to travel from the site. Thus, the existing natural wildlife corridors will remain intact.

Fitzthum asked if the request for a radio tower would need to be a separate CUP or Variance request. Rasmussen replied it would be if the tower meets the conditions which require a CUP or Variance request.

Orman asked if the garden has the ability to expand beyond the 5 MW. Rasmussen replied that the CUP and land area caps the area at 50 acres or 5 mw. Any desire to grow beyond that would require an amendment to the CUP.

Persen asked why the limit on 5 MW. The representative of Solar Stone was present to explain the ability to provide and not exceed 5 MW.

**A MOTION WAS MADE BY GRUBER, TO RECOMMEND APPROVAL OF THE FINDINGS OF FACT SUPPORTING THE CONDITIONAL USE PERMIT REQUEST. THE MOTION WAS SECONDED BY MOEN. UPON VOTE BEING TAKEN THE FOLLOWING VOTED:**

**AYE: ORMAN, FITZTHUM, MOEN, GRUBER, PERSEN**

**NAY: NONE**

**MOTION CARRIED**

**A MOTION WAS MADE BY MOEN, TO RECOMMEND APPROVAL OF THE CONDITIONAL USE PERMIT. THE MOTION WAS SECONDED BY GRUBER UPON VOTE BEING TAKEN THE FOLLOWING VOTED:**

**AYE: PERSEN, FITZTHUM, ORMAN, MOEN, GRUBER**

**NAY: NONE**

**MOTION CARRIED**

### **ORDINANCE AMENDMENT – SOLAR REQUIREMENTS**

Rasmussen provided an update on the proposed solar requirements for non-commercialized residential, commercial and industrial individual use.

Orman raised concerns about allowing solar panels on residential properties and the effect it may have on adjoining properties.

Other concerns raised included placement, size and scope of any proposed solar panels on residential properties. The decommissioning of the units was also raised as a concern. Gruber asked what are the typical standards (in other cities) as it relates to solar panels.

**A MOTION WAS MADE BY FITZTHUM TO TABLE THE SOLAR REQUIRMENTS ORIDNANCE DISCUSSION TO DECEMBER. THE MOTION WAS SECONDED BY GRUBER UPON VOTE BEING TAKEN THE FOLLOWING VOTED:**

**AYE: PERSEN, FITZTHUM, ORMAN, MOEN, GRUBER**

**NAY: NONE**

**MOTION CARRIED**

### **OLD BUSINESS**

Rasmussen provided an update to the comprehensive planning review and adoption timeline. The timeline is contingent on workload and is subject to change.

### **OTHER BUSINESS**

#### **PROPERTY MAINTENANCE ISSUES**

Orman requested an update on the handling property maintenance issues specifically for Commercial developments. Rasmussen did not have any further updates in terms of what the City currently has per current ordinance requirements and policy, which includes grass, and weed issues fall under the jurisdiction of the Public Works department. At the December meeting, staff will provide a report on research collected relating to dealing with stockpiles, roadway areas and other maintenance issues for further discussion by the Commission.

Rasmussen and Nielson provided updates on the following issues:

- Pinecone Road update
- LeSauk Drive Project

- Kwik Trip
- Providence and Arbor Trails
- Paper Mill property
- Community Center Open Houses

Fitzthum asked about tree replacement along Pinecone Road and the condition of the roundabout on 19<sup>th</sup> Avenue. Concern was also raised about the new stockpile of dirt along Pinecone Road near Scout. Staff would review.

**ADJOURN**

**A MOTION WAS MADE BY FITZTHUM TO ADJOURN THE MEETING AT 7:15 P.M. THE MOTION WAS SECONDED BY PERSEN. UPON VOTE BEING TAKEN THE FOLLOWING VOTED:**

**AYE: GRUBER, FITZTHUM, ORMAN, PERSEN, MOEN**

**NAY: NONE**

**MOTION CARRIED**

Minutes by:

Anita Rasmussen, Community Development Director