

## Planning & Zoning Commission Meeting

November 18, 2024

7:00 pm – Meeting Called to Order by Ron Cooper

Meeting was called to order and Pledge of Allegiance done and roll taken

Those in attendance included:

Planning Commission Chair – Jake (Ronald) Cooper

Planning Commission members – Mike Sweeney, Mike Homerding, Brian Anderson

Absent was Pat Lippold

Township Clerk Steve Grebner

Guests included Steve Gengler, Doug Westphal, Amy Westphal, Carolyn Pottinger, Don Hirsch, Doug Thanepohn, Nick Bellone (Engineer) and Tom Ryan (Project Mgr) (both New Leaf Energy Reps)

Presentation by Tom Ryan and Nick Bellone from Green Leaf Energy regarding the proposed request for Special Use designation for the Property on Ament Road AKA Ament Road Solar Farm 1 LLC. It was stated by them this had been in process for quite some time and recently received word Yorkville did not want to Annex this property into the United City of Yorkville, so the County became the primary governing body. There are two parcels that make up the subject property, but solar panels are only going to be placed on the back parcel (approx. 35 acres). When asked why, they said this was the size necessary to provide the required amount of energy to the existing grid structure. When pressed for more information, they stated that given the proximity to the nearest substation, this would be the only Solar farm that could be built in the township (unless the grid is increased by Com Ed and Utility Commission). It will produce up to 5 Megawatts of power and use step down transformers and no batteries to transport the energy to the grid. The panels will be single axis tracking panels, following the sun as it traverses the sky to have maximum efficiency. They were asked how much of their materials were made in America and while they didn't know, they said it is difficult to find enough panels made in America to do the job but there are more manufacturing companies ramping up. They shared the make-up of actual panels, and shared they are 90% glass and the only known issue is a small amount of Lead in the solder used, and again stated there are no batteries on premises. There were big concerns voiced by Committeeperson Homerding (and others) regarding the Water Retention and subsurface tiling and its impact to the neighboring existing farm fields.

They shared the initial Tile Survey and said that this is only the initial one and a much more in depth one will occur once the project is approved. Doug Westphal shared some history of the farm-ground near the subject property and the issues with drainage in that section of ground in the township. The representatives listened and stated they appreciated the insight provided and will definitely take all of that local knowledge into consideration to the long-term plan.

There were also concerns raised about the Weeds and what was to be done regarding weed control. They said they plant an approved Native Pollinator packet and have program of care included in their packet (Attachment 6). It was asked about mowing and they have a scheduled mowing once grass is established, or there are some projects that hire shepherds to bring in sheep to graze the property.

There were stated concerns about the long-term health of the underlying ground once the Solar Farm is Decommissioned. When pressed they do not have any solar farms of sufficient age that they have actually done a decommission but their plan addresses that and there is no concrete pilings, and it is their position that due to their cover crop of natural pollinators, and awareness of drainage, they are confident in the fact the ground will be returned to productivity. This was met with skepticism by some in attendance and it was asked why are you taking ground whose productivity rating is 96.7% out of production when there could be other property that would be less impactful to the future food production of this area. They stated that it is function of availability, topography, and proximity to existing grid access that determines where a community solar farm as this would be located. They also stated that there is a "line" that only one "project" can be considered at a time and if they pull out, then some other company will be in line and they might not be as open to suggestions as they are.

It was also discussed the Solar Project on Newark Road (also one of theirs) is aesthetically not pleasing and they stated that they believe the final landscaping isn't done but they will look at that.

There were other questions regarding Glare (there supposedly isn't any due to a non-glare coating being applied to the panels. Also based upon the project plan it was asked if we required some "batting" to be weaved in the chain link fence if they would be open to it. They said that they have done that in other places, and if asked they would be consider it. They were asked at what point does this "project" turn a profit? 5 years, 10 years???? They couldn't answer that question so follow up question was what about a potential change in green energy policy – what impact would that have? They said that while the current policy is beneficial, any change shouldn't have any impact on those projects already in production, but it is their hope that the desire for renewable energy is something that will continue in the future.

The presenters were thanked for their time and effort to answer any and all of the questions posed.

Minutes of last meeting (Sept 2024) were read and discussion occurred and two grammatical (spelling) error<sup>2</sup> were found and corrected. Vote was called to approve the amended minutes. Motion made by Brian Anderson and seconded by Mike Homerding. Motion was approved unanimously.

Chairman Cooper asked for any additional public comments and after hearing none requested the Planning board compile a motion regarding the position on the above Project. See attachment "A".

The Planning Commission recommends approval of Petition 24-30 with these recommendations:

*“The entity will maintain and repair the subsurface drainage throughout the entirety of the lease to be repaired within the timeframe indicated in the special use permit (sup). The entity will commit to, as part of their maintenance schedule, perform a physical inspection of the property to include drain tile observation for damage and necessary repair. The surrounding property owners shall be provided a copy of the existing drain tile survey of subject property as well as any changes made as part of this project.*

*We would request that there be a subsurface drainage repair bond to ensure there are sufficient funds available for any required repair of materials and labor at the time of agreement. All replacement tile shall equal to or greater than its current flow.*

*The planning and zoning committee also recommends as part of the comprehensive MONITORING AND MANAGEMENT PLAN AMENT ROAD SOLAR FARM – KENDALL COUNTY (section 1-6) specific attention to the noxious weeds including but not limited to water hemp, and Giant Ragweed.”*

The motion to approve above Action was moved by Brian Anderson and seconded by Mike Sweeney. Role call vote was taken and it passed with 4 “ayes” and 1 “absent”. This will be forwarded on to the whole board for action at next Monthly Township Meeting.

Motion to adjourn was made by Brian Anderson, seconded by Mike Homerding and passed unanimously.

Meeting Adjourned 9:45pm

Next scheduled meeting is Decemeber16th 2024 at 7:00 PM at township building.

Respectfully submitted by Steve Grebner Kendall Township Clerk

## Attachment "A"

Motion by the Planning Commission regarding the Ament Solar 1 LLC.

The Planning Commission recommends approval of Petition 24-30 with these recommendations:

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We would request that there be a subsurface drainage repair bond to ensure there are sufficient funds available for any required repair of materials and labor at the time of agreement. All replacement tile shall equal to or greater than its current flow.

The planning and zoning committee also recommends as part of the comprehensive MONITORING AND MANAGEMENT PLAN AMENT ROAD SOLAR FARM – KENDALL COUNTY (section 1-6) specific attention to the noxious weeds including but not limited to water hemp, and Giant Ragweed.