

MINUTES

Pierce County Joint Planning Commission Pierce, Nebraska

The February 24, 2025, meeting of the Pierce County Joint Planning Commission was called to order by Secretary Aschoff at 6:11 p.m. in the Pierce County Planning Multi-Purpose Room, 111 W Court St, Pierce, Nebraska.

Call To Order/Roll Call- Consideration and/or action on:

Present: Larry Schaefer, Bonita Lederer, Guy Ellsworth, Dwaine Hoffman and Joe Aschoff.

Tardy: Gerry Krueger

Absent: Ryan Zimmerman, Bonita Lederer, Tom Kuether and Tom Nathan.

Also present: Nick Krienert, Del Johnson, Ron Stech, Tracy Golden, Matt Sorenson, Bob Wingeit, Marlin Schmit, Administrator Heather McWhorter, and Office Assistant Jennie Martinez.

Proof of Publication: Aschoff stated there were notices in The Plainview News, The Osmond Republican, and The Pierce Leader.

Open Meeting Act: Aschoff pointed out the Open Meetings Act is posted on the wall and will be followed.

Minutes- November 25, 2024: The minutes of November 25, 2024, Pierce County Joint Planning Commission were presented. Motion made by Ellsworth to approve the minutes and seconded by Hoffman. Members Ellsworth, Aschoff, Schaefer, and Hoffman vote "AYE" none vote "NAY". Motion Carried.

Aschoff reads the first Public Hearing.

The purpose of this hearing is to receive public comments concerning the application of Northeast Public Power for a 2.5-Megawatt Solar farm on property described as the South Half of the Southeast ¼ of Section 19 Township 28 North, Range 2 West of the 6th P.M, Pierce County, Nebraska. This property is located one mile North and ½ mile East of the City of Osmond, at the intersection of 547th Ave & 866th Rd. (Parcel # 700018739)

Heather states that the proposed project is in an Ag Intensive District and is allowed as Conditional Use.

Heather reads the Statement of Finding of Facts and Recommended Conditions.

Statement of Finding of Facts:

1. The application is consistent with the Pierce County Comprehensive Plan and with the Pierce County Zoning and Subdivision Regulations.
2. The solar array will be 2.5 MW and be located on approximately 20 acres.
3. Property is in an Ag Intensive district.

Recommended Conditions:

1. This Conditional Use Permit allows applicants to build a 2.5 MW Solar Farm.
2. Applicant must obtain necessary permits from the State of Nebraska and follow all local permitting as well.
3. Applicant must abide by regulations regarding signage, lighting and other applicable regulations as stated in the Pierce County Regulations.
4. An approved zoning permit must be obtained before the construction of solar array begins.

6:14 P.M. Aschoff opens the Public Hearing.

Aschoff asks if there is anyone in favor.

Matt Sorenson speaks in favor. He explains why they would like to move the substation and the benefits to both the city and rural areas. He states that there would be benefits to irrigation systems as well.

Sorenson states that there are tax incentives in keeping the project under 5 mw, therefore it will stay under that. He states that there will be a low to moderate income project. He states that the board signed a resolution stating that half the savings the first 5 years will be given back to the low to moderate income within the footprint of the project.

Dwaine Hoffman asks what he estimates the savings to be.

Sorenson states that a similar project in Kansas estimated \$100 a customer the first year.

Aschoff verifies that the power unit will be moved with the substation.

Sorenson states that it will.

Aschoff verifies that it will be approximately 20 acres.

Sorenson confirms.

Aschoff asks if there is the possibility of expanding in the future.

Sorenson states that they will not because the project needs to stay small in order to keep the project local.

Aschoff asks if the taxes on the project will come off the tax roll.

Sorenson confirms.

Krueger asks if they pay a separate tax.

Heather states that they are a public entity.

Aschoff asks if the NRD recommended they do something for flood control or drainage.

Tracy Golden states that they are aware that the property needs to raise the ground up.

Sorenson states that he has talked to Brian McDonald about the road.

Marlin Schmit asks if regulations would prevent him from building in the future.

Heather states that he can build.

Aschoff asks if there is anyone else in favor.

Ron Stech; director, states that he is in favor. He states that they are always looking for an innovative idea like this. He states that they have been looking at this for the better part of a year now and they see value that they can bring to both rural and Osmond. He states that in 1 year we will see the value to rural and Osmond as this project is beneficial, reliable and will help with the cost of power.

Aschoff asks if there is anyone else in favor.

No one speaks.

Aschoff asks if anyone is opposed.

Marlin Schmit asks what this will look like later as this project will only be about 200 yards away from him. He asks about noise on his doorstep and if there is the potential for underground stray electrical voltage.

Sorenson states that there is little to no noise and there is not the possibility of stray electricity.

Nick Krienert asks about fire and if he would be liable if it burns his cornfield.
Sorensen states they are liable just the same as if an overhead powerline causes a fire.
Tracy Golden states that they carry insurance.
Nick Krienert clarifies that there really is no cost savings for the farmer, just more reliable power.
Matt Sorenson states that they will not have to buy as much capacity and this project will help everyone not just Osmond keep the rates down.
Aschoff asks if anyone else is opposed.
Marlin Schmit states that he is not thrilled about it.
Del Johnson clarifies the location.
Matt Sorenson explains the location.
Marlin Schmit asks if there will be any glare.
Matt Sorenson states that there is a chance that there could be some glare at some point on the road.
Del Johnson states that the panels are close to the ground.
Matt Sorenson explains the dimensions and how far they sit off the ground.
Nick Krienert states that the area has a lot of blow sand and asks if they will be laying grass or rock in the project area.
Matt Sorenson states that they will be putting something in the area.
Marlin Schmit states for weed control it will need rock or grass.
Nick Krienert asks if it will be maintained.
Matt Sorenson states that it will.
Heather explains that Madison County has 2 that have been in operation for about 4 years the same size. She states that there have not been any complaints.
Ellsworth states that there is one mile away from his property and has never heard any noise or seen any glare. He states that you don't even notice that it is there.
Krueger asks questions about water flow due to the stream that goes through.
Heather states that it is in the flood plain and states that they will need a flood plain development permit.
Marlin Schmit asks them to think about the flood possibility when they are doing dirt work and uses a previous flood as an example.
Heather explains that they will have to be at least 1 foot above the base flood elevation.
Marlin Schmit asks if this will affect the property value of his home or the farm ground.
Aschoff states that he is unsure as this is new. He states that it depends on the person looking to purchase.
Marlin Schmit asks about the transmission lines
Matt Sorenson states that at least part will be underground.
Del Johnson asks how deep the lines are going across the creek.
Matt Sorenson states that they go down deep under the creek.
Del Johnson asks when they are planning to start.
Matt Sorenson states that they will order immediately and start the 1st or 2nd quarter of 2026.
6:42 P.M. Aschoff closes the Public Hearing.

Ellsworth makes a motion to recommend approval based on the above recommended conditions. Hoffman seconds the motion.
Members Krueger, Ellsworth, Aschoff, Hoffman and Schaefer vote "AYE"
None vote "NAY."
Motion Carried.

Aschoff reads the next Public Hearing.

The purpose of this hearing is to receive public comments concerning an amendment to the Pierce County Zoning and Subdivision Regulations, Section 6.04.01 Solar Farm Definitions to include the definition of Landowner and Property owner.

Heather states that there have been questions regarding the term property owner in the discontinuation paragraph of the solar regulations. The property owner is the owner of the solar property that has applied for the conditional use permit, not the owner of the land, which is the landowner. Due to the questions, it was decided to add a definition of property owner in relation to the solar regulations to clarify the meaning.

6.04.06 Discontinuation.

A solar farm shall be considered abandoned after one year without energy production. The property owner shall remove all solar farm equipment and appurtenances within 90 days of abandonment.

Added to 6.04.01 Solar Farms, Definitions will be the following:

Definitions

The following definitions pertain specifically to this section of the Resolution.

Landowner: A person who owns land.

Property Owner: The owner of the lease agreement and property associated with the approved Conditional Use Permit such as solar equipment, maintenance structures, and other related appurtenances.

Heather states that the two definitions are the only items discussed in the public hearing. The discussion will not include any other amendments to the solar regulations.

6:47 p.m. Aschoff opens the public hearing.

Aschoff asks if there is anyone in favor.

No one speaks.

Aschoff asks if anyone is opposed.

No one speaks.

6:48 p.m. Closes the public hearing.

Ellsworth makes a motion to recommend approval of the amendment to 6.04.01 Solar farms to include the definitions of Landowner and Property Owner. Krueger seconds the motion.

Members Krueger, Ellsworth, Aschoff, Hoffman and Schaefer vote "AYE"

None vote "NAY."

Motion Carried.

Other Business:

Heather gives the Administrators report.

Zoning permits are discussed.

6:54 p.m. Krueger motions to Adjourn.
Hoffman seconds the motion.
All vote "AYE" none vote "NAY".
Meeting adjourned.