



Lake County, IL

Zoning Board of Appeals – Regular Session

MINUTES

May 15, 2025, 1:00 P.M.
Zion-Benton Public Library
2400 Gabriel Ave, Zion, IL 60099

ZBA Members Present:

Gregory Koeppen	Present	Dalila Mondragon	Present
Maria Peterson	Present	Maggie Roche	Present
Judy Garcia	Present	Rick Molina	Present
Thaddeus Henderson	Present	Ronald Traub	Absent

Full comments on all agenda items are included in the audio recording of this meeting.

1. CALL TO ORDER

Hearing was called to order 1:02 P.M.

2. ROLL CALL

3. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIENCE

4. PUBLIC COMMENT

5. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

6. ADDED TO AGENDA ITEMS

7. DEFERRED MATTERS

8. OTHER BUSINESS

CUP-001072-2025: *On the petition of Frank Ryser as successor trustee under a Trust Agreement dated July 11, 1993, record owner, who seeks a Conditional Use Permit to establish a Commercial Solar Energy System.*

Vincent Moschella presented the application and request for a Commercial Solar Energy System. Carrie Williams presented the stormwater management report and site plan for the project. Ben Dykema with ECA Solar presented the wetlands study and the project's impacts on the wetlands.

Member Garcia asked what happens to the material once it is decommissioned. Mr. Moschella noted that he has not had the experience of decommissioning a solar project yet as solar projects have a typical lifespan of 25 years. He said that a majority of the panels were recycled and reused for other projects.

Member Peterson inquired about the Tier I panels and what it means to have a “good chance to honor warranties”. Mr. Moschella stated that banks rely on these claims to give guidance to investors direction on who they should work with. Tier levels refer to the diversity within the company. Member Peterson asked about the lead content within the study presented and its impacts on health. Mr. Moschella stated that he could not reference the exact study.

Member Molina inquired about the access roads on the south end of the site and spacing between panels and whether emergency vehicles would be able to access the site. Ms. Williams noted that there is a 17-foot gap between panels. Member Molina stated that he believes the code requires 20-feet between panels. He additionally asked if there were any questions as to the distance from the road of the panels. Ms. Williams stated that they worked with PBD to ensure pedestrian safety.

Marianne Koffs, a neighbor, noted that the work appears to be performed on Kilburn St. Additionally, she asked what work is being performed on 9th street. Mr. Moschella stated that the address was under W 9th Street because the house that was a part of the land originally had a W 9th Street address, which is no longer a part of the property. Ms. Koffs inquired about what will happen with the rest of the land and whether it will be developed. Mr. Moschella stated that it is mostly located within the floodplain and that it cannot be developed.

Jeremy Nellessen, Zion Fire Protection District, stated that the County should readdress the address to a Kilburn address for emergency services.

Member Peterson asked about how long it would take for emergency services to access the site. Mr. Moschella noted that there is 24/7 monitoring on the site that will be able to shut down the site remotely. Additionally, a knock box is located on the site so that emergency services can access the site immediately.

Chair Koeppen asked whether there was a placard with emergency numbers. Mr. Moschella noted that they will have an emergency number plaque.

Ms. Koffs stated that she finds it difficult to believe that the rest of the site will remain undeveloped. Mr. Moschella noted that the site is mostly wetlands, so no projects would be able to occur on those areas of the site regardless. He noted that studies were done to see if any additional land could be used, and there was no room for the company to develop outside of

the site area. Frank Olson, Senior Planner/Project Manager, noted that any future uses on the site would have to be allowed in agricultural zones.

Paula Schiera, a neighbor, noted that she is concerned about the wildlife on the site. She asked whether anything would happen to the wildlife as they fly over the panels. Mr. Moschella noted that their project and the native plantings included are intended to create habitats for migratory birds. A glare analysis is required for solar projects and this solar project has a glare treatment to reduce overall glare.

Ms. Koffs inquired as to how it will be connected to the electrical grid. Mr. Moschella noted that the existing lines along the roadway are all that they use to connect to the distribution grid.

Ms. Schiera asked about the discount for neighbors to the site. Mr. Moschella noted that he would contact her to receive a discount.

Mr. Nellessen noted that there will be 24-hour access to the fire department from the site. He additionally noted that all disconnects will be accessible from the entrance drive. He also noted that the 17-20-foot distance between panels was approved by Lake County Staff. Mr. Nellessen noted that all concerns from the fire department were addressed and met by the company.

Ms. Schiera asked when the purchase of the land would go through. Mr. Moschella stated that the purchase would happen on 5/16/25. She asked about when operations would start. Steve Gorley stated that the building would start on 6/15/25. She asked how long the panels would be on site. Mr. Moschella stated they would be on-site for at least 6 years for financial reasons. Ms. Schiera asked if there were any safety concerns such as explosions on site. Mr. Dykema noted that there are no flammable components in the panels.

Melanie Molback, a neighbor, asked about the noise level from the site. Mr. Moschella noted that there was a maximum of 67 decibels if someone is standing within a 9-foot radius. Mr. Dykema stated that at a maximum, it would sound like a whisper from the property line. Additionally, Ms. Molback asked about how the lines will be connected. Mr. Moschella noted that no lines will be buried from existing lines.

Member Peterson asked about whether native plants would be used. Mr. Moschella said native plants would be used. Member Peterson asked whether there would be a 6-inch gap from the ground for the fence. Mr. Moschella stated that the bottom 2-feet of the fence would be open.

Motion to approve CUP-001072-2025 by Member Peterson, seconded by Member Garcia.
Motion passed 7-0.

VAR-001076-2025: *On the petition of Frank Ryser as successor trustee under a Trust Agreement dated July 11, 1993, record owner, who seeks the following variation from the requirements of the Lake County Code and any other zoning relief as required:*

- 1. Modify the required transition landscape requirement from 3 plant units per 100 linear feet and a 6-foot fence with 95% opacity to 2 evergreen shrubs per 100 linear feet and an 8-foot fence with 95% opacity.*

Mr. Moschella presented the variation request. Mr. Moschella noted that they were unable to make a connection with one of the six neighbors on the eastern side of the property to reach a transition yard agreement. He noted that the trees that are required to meet the Lake County Code grow taller than what is appropriate for a solar array.

Mr. Dykema noted that their request is in place to maintain what is already there and what will be planted in the future.

Mr. Moschella discussed that ECA Solar did walk the property with some of the adjacent homeowners and addressed their concerns directly.

Member Roche inquired as to how many linear feet are on the plan. He noted that there are 326 linear feet on the boundary. Member Roche asked what type of trees will be planted. Mr. Moschella noted that the “green giant” variety of tree will be planted. Member Roche asked what the height they will trim them will be. Mr. Moschella noted that they will be trimmed to roughly 20 feet. Member Roche stated that she does not have the perspective of knowing exactly where they will be located and how tall the trees will be.

Member Henderson asked why the applicants could not plant the entire plant unit. Mr. Olson noted the entirety of what is within the plant unit.

Member Peterson inquired as to what the proposed amount means in comparison to the required amount. Mr. Olson noted that the transition yard agreement was reached as an effort to communicate with neighbors.

Jerry Nellessen asked if Staff could show the aerial imagery for the vegetation. Mr. Olson further described the request for the vegetation.

Motion to enter executive session by Member Roche, seconded by Member Peterson.

Regular session re-entered at 3:30 P.M.

Chair Koeppen asked Mr. Moschella to explain the transition agreement again and the agreements reached with neighbors. Mr. Moschella indicated that if neighbors had concerns, they would be addressed.

Motion to approve VAR-001076-2025 by Member Peterson, seconded by Member

9. ANNOUNCEMENTS

10. ADJOURNMENT

Hearing adjourned at 2:37 P.M.