

**MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF THE WYTHEVILLE PLANNING COMMISSION
HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBERS ON THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 9, 2021, AT 6:00 P.M.**

Members present: John W. Jones, Jr., George F. Wittwer, Cathy D. Pattison, Kenny W. Ervin, Bradford M. Litton, M. Bradley Tate

Members absent: Kevin L. Varney

Others present: Mayor Beth A. Taylor, Councilman Mark J. Bloomfield, Town Clerk Sharon G. Corvin, Planning Director John Woods, Eric Crowgey

RE: CALL TO ORDER, QUORUM

Chairman Jones called the meeting to order and established that a quorum was present.

RE: CONSENT AGENDA

Chairman Jones presented the consent agenda consisting of the minutes of the regular meeting of July 8, 2021. He inquired of the Commission if there were any additions or corrections to the consent agenda or if there was a motion to approve the consent agenda, as presented. A motion was made by Vice-Chairman Wittwer and seconded by Mr. Tate to approve the minutes of the regular meeting of July 8, 2021, as presented. Chairman Jones inquired if there was any discussion on the motion. There being none, the motion was approved with the following voting in favor and there being no opposition: For: John W. Jones, Jr., George F. Wittwer, Cathy D. Pattison, Kenny W. Ervin, Bradford M. Litton, M. Bradley Tate. Against: None.

RE: CITIZENS' PERIOD

Chairman Jones advised that the next agenda item is Citizens' Period. He noted that there were no citizens attending the meeting who stated that they wished to address the Commission during Citizens' Period, therefore, he would proceed with the agenda.

Mr. Eric Crowgey remarked that he would like to address the Planning Commission when the Commission came to the agenda item regarding solar facilities. Chairman Jones stated that it would be acceptable for Mr. Crowgey to speak during that time.

RE: FENCING/WALL REGULATIONS

Chairman Jones advised that the next agenda item is the continued discussion regarding fencing/wall regulations in residential, business and industrial districts. Planning Director Woods stated that he would try to summarize the revisions as much as he possibly could so that the Commissioners could understand what has been changed. He reviewed the ordinance revisions with the Planning Commissioners. Planning Director Woods inquired of the Commission if there were any questions or comments regarding the proposed revisions to the ordinance. Mr. Litton inquired regarding the proposed regulation that would not allow people to use barbed wire fence in certain zoning districts in town. He commented that the way the proposed regulations are worded, they would not allow barbed wire fence to be used even in A-1 Agriculture Zoning Districts in town, which is where it should be allowed to be used. Discussion continued regarding barbed wire and razor wire fence throughout certain zoning districts in town. Mr. Litton inquired if the proposed ordinance could state "if the fence is a grandfathered as a continued use, then the fence may continue to be used..." He remarked that the other revisions look great. Planning Director

Woods advised that he will work on these revisions. Chairman Jones inquired if there were any further questions or comments. There being none, he proceeded with the agenda.

RE: SOLAR FARMS

Chairman Jones advised that the next agenda item is the review of the draft Solar Energy Facility Regulations. He noted that a first draft of the proposed Solar Energy Facility Ordinance has been included in each Commissioner's packet. Chairman Jones remarked that Planning Director Woods will discuss highlights of the proposed ordinance and provide the Commission with an opportunity to review and discuss this issue.

Chairman Jones inquired of Mr. Eric Crowgey if he would like to address the Planning Commission before or after Planning Director Woods reviews the proposed ordinance with the Planning Commission. Mr. Crowgey stated that he would wait to speak after Planning Director Woods reviews the draft ordinance.

Planning Director Woods stated that the draft Solar Energy Facility Ordinance is based on the existing ordinance from Halifax County, Virginia. He continued to review the proposed ordinance with the Commissioners. He noted that one thing the ordinance cannot do is prohibit anyone from installing a solar system as a by right use for personal use per State Code, however, the Town can regulate their appearance. Planning Director Woods discussed what would be addressed in the proposed ordinance. He explained that he tried to write the proposed ordinance for this community, but he would like for the Planning Commission to study it and be ready to give their feedback at the next meeting. Vice-Chairman Wittwer inquired of Planning Director Woods if the Town has already approved a solar farm. Planning Director Woods stated that is correct. He noted that there is a solar farm located behind the Pepsi Bottling Facility. Planning Director Woods continued to explain that it is primarily located in Wythe County, therefore, most of the approval process will go through the County. He noted that since it did not violate the Town's Zoning Ordinance, the Town did not take any action against the solar farm.

Mr. Eric Crowgey was recognized and stated that there is a solar facility that is being proposed near the Pepsi Bottling Facility, and it has been in the process for the last four years. He noted that the Department of Environment Quality (DEQ) has the overall total control of the solar facility. Mr. Crowgey continued to discuss the proposed solar farm to be located near the Pepsi Bottling Facility with the Planning Commission. Mr. Crowgey advised that the proposed solar farm will provide electrical energy for every house in the town. Discussion ensued regarding the solar energy facilities of the future. Chairman Jones inquired of Mr. Crowgey regarding how much of the solar farm property is located within the town. Mr. Crowgey advised that 70 acres of the property are located within the town limits. Mr. Crowgey continued to explain the public hearing process that DEQ required for the proposed solar farm. Mr. Tate inquired of Mr. Crowgey if Wythe County has required items for the proposed solar farm or if it has mainly been DEQ. Mr. Crowgey explained that the County and the Town have approved the Erosion and Sediment Control Plan, which is filed through DEQ. He advised that DEQ has the final approval regarding the solar farm. Mr. Crowgey thanked the Planning Commission for allowing him to speak, and the Commissioners thanked Mr. Crowgey for his comments.

The Planning Commissioners continued to discuss the draft Solar Energy Facility Regulations and the proposed solar farm near the Pepsi plant. Planning Director Woods expressed that he could not think of a more promising site for a solar farm than the proposed site for the future solar farm near the Pepsi plant.

Mr. Eric Crowgey was recognized and continued to express to the Planning Commissioners the positive effects that the solar farm would have on the town. Discussion was held regarding DEQ controlling the major issues when they arise with solar farms and the fact that regulations need to be in place, but they need to be simple and easy to follow. Vice-Mayor Pattison inquired of the Planning Commissioners to think about the future, and if the town were to grow by incorporating more land from the County of Wythe, then there will be a need for a more comprehensive solar plan. Mr. Litton commented that he thinks there is currently a moratorium on annexation now. He noted that he read somewhere there has been a moratorium on annexation since 2002 in Virginia. Chairman Jones remarked that he thinks the Planning Commissioners should take the proposed draft ordinance home, continue to review it over the next month, give Planning Director Woods the chance to make any additional changes to the draft ordinance that were discussed at this meeting and then discuss it further at the October Planning Commission meeting, if the Commission concurs. It was the consensus of the Planning Commission to continue to discuss the Solar Energy Facility Regulations at the October meeting. Chairman Jones inquired of the Planning Commission if there were any other comments or questions regarding the Solar Energy Facility Regulations. There being none, he proceeded with the agenda.

RE: ANNUAL REPORT

Chairman Jones advised that the next agenda item is the review of the 2020-21 Annual Report. He commented that the Planning Commission would request that Vice-Mayor Pattison present the Annual Report for the 2020-2021 Fiscal Year to the Town Council at the next Town Council meeting, therefore, if there are any particular matters in the report that should be brought to the Council's attention, now is the time to discuss those items. Vice-Chairman Wittwer inquired of Planning Director Woods regarding page 14 and promoting electric vehicle use. Discussion ensued regarding this item. Mr. Litton inquired of Town staff what their thoughts were regarding including something to help with the housing shortage in the town. Planning Director Woods continued to discuss the housing shortage in town along with other issues regarding housing. Discussion ensued regarding housing, the need for housing in the near future in Wytheville, incentives for housing in the town, etc. There being no further discussion regarding the Annual Report, Chairman Jones proceeded with the agenda.

RE: RESCHEDULING MEETING

Chairman Jones advised that the next agenda item is to reschedule the November 11, 2021, Planning Commission meeting due to the Veterans Day holiday. It was noted that it has been the practice in the past to reschedule Planning Commission meetings when they fall on an observed holiday. A motion was made by Vice-Chairman Wittwer and seconded by Vice-Mayor Pattison to reschedule the Thursday, November 11, 2021, Planning Commission meeting to Wednesday, November 10, 2021, due to the Veterans Day holiday. Chairman Jones inquired if there was any discussion on the motion. There being none, the motion was approved with the following voting in favor and there being no opposition: For: John W. Jones, Jr., George F. Wittwer, Cathy D. Pattison, Kenny W. Ervin, Bradford M. Litton, M. Bradley Tate. Against: None.

RE: ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, a motion was duly made, seconded and carried to adjourn the meeting (7:16 p.m.).

John W. Jones, Jr., Chairman

Sharon G. Corvin, CMC, Town Clerk