

Approved Meeting Minutes
Fairfield Town Council / Planning & Zoning
Special Meeting
August 19, 2020

SPECIAL MEETING

DATE: Tuesday, August 19, 2020

LOCATION: Fairfield Town Office, 17872 W. 1540 N., Fairfield, Utah

TIME: 6:00 p.m.

MINUTES BY: Stephanie Shelley

AGENDA ITEM #1 - OPEN THE TOWN COUNCIL/PLANNING & ZONING SPECIAL MEETING.

Chairwoman Pringle called the Planning & Zoning/ Town Council Special Meeting to order at 7:06 p.m.

AGENDA ITEM #2 - ROLL CALL.

Planning & Zoning Commissioners Present: Alina Pringle, David Riet, Heather Strong, Jane Lancaster

Town Council Members Present: Mayor Brad Gurney, RL Panek, Tyler Thomas, Hollie McKinney, Jayson Densley

Excused:

Daymon Stephens - Planning Commissioner

Staff Present:

Stephanie Shelley- Recorder

Others Present: Adam Lang, Vern Carson, Stefan Eckmann (NEXtera), Ryan Fitzpatrick (NEXtera), Wes Quinton (LDS Church), Ronnie Wilson, Robert Livingston, Melanie McVivcker (LDS Church), Heidi Brunner, Shane Hill (Utah Div. of Wildlife), Bettina Cameron, Syliva Lawerence, Peter Lawerence, Thom Belchak, Jaren Hancock, Jared Parkinson.

AGENDA ITEM #3 - DISCUSSION WITH THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY- SAINTS AND THE SOLAR FARM COMPANY.

Stefan Eckmann introduced himself as the Project Manager for NEXtera Energy Resources. Stefan informed the Council and Commissioners that they had named the solar project in Fairfield the Fairfield Solar Project. [<http://www.fairfieldsolarproject.com/>] Stefan gave an overview of their company.

Mr. EckMann stated that they are interested in getting a long term contract with Rocky Mountain Power, and NEXtera will have 80 megawatts of battery storage.

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Commissioner Lancaster clarified what the location of Phase 1 on the map was. Mr. EckMann confirmed that phase 1 had completed the most studies on that area, and they are working on completing more studies for Fairfield, Phase 2.

Commissioner Riet stated that the 160 megawatts produced by NEXTERa are a lot lower than what is being proposed to be 50 watts produced by the smaller [less acreage] solar company that may be going in down by Facebook. Mr. EckMann stated that it is 5 to 8 acres for every megawatt. Commissioner Riet asked what kind of batteries they will be using for the battery storage. Mr. EckMann said they would be using lithium-ion batteries. Commissioner Riet asked if they have had any fires with these batteries. Mr. EckMann said no. Mr. EckMann also stated that safety is their #1 priority. He said there are strong safety guidelines that they are required to follow. Commissioner Riet asked what the life of those batteries was and what the backup was. Mr. EckMann stated that they have a 15 to 20-year life expectancy and that the backup is 50% on all the sites. He also said that anything more is of less value. Commissioner Riet stated that he feels there is a good market for that type of solar.

Chairwoman Pringle asked what the town's benefit would be with so little tax money coming back to Fairfield. Mr. EckMann said that Alpine School District gets a majority of the tax money. He also said that his company would like to partner with the Town for the community's life span, which could be 30 to 35 years.

Commissioner Lancaster asked why the Church would invest in solar. Wes Quinton, the Church representative, stated they are leasing the land to NEXTERa, and they have worked with them before and found them to be a good company to work with. He said the Church would retain ownership of the property. Mr. Quinton said that the Church is interested in solar energy and wants to make the land's best use. He said they will still be involved in agriculture projects.

Commissioner Strong asked what happens at the end of the contract to decommission the land. Ms. McVickers said that they would have a 10-year bond that returns the land to its original condition. She stated that they have to bid on taking down the panels, and then the bond will be made.

Commissioner Riet asked how they would dispose of the rechargeable batteries, and it was expensive. Mr. Fitzpatrick said there is not a high cost in disposing of rechargeable batteries, and he also stated that they are the world's leading operator of battery storage.

Commissioner Lancaster asked if the solar farm is a silent operation. Mr. Fitzpatrick stated that the nearest residence is the Church Ranch resident. Mr. Fitzpatrick said there might be a

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little hum close to it but not a constant buzz. Commissioner Riet asked how much noise the motors on the panels expend. Mr. Fitzpatrick said each row is linked together, and they turn very slowly as they follow the sun. Commissioner Riet said he would like to know what the decibel reading would be at ground zero for the motors. Mr. Fitzpatrick said he would get that information for him.

Commissioner Lancaster asked what other Towns' reactions have been to this size of a solar farm. Ryan Fitzpatrick stated that they have referenced several studies on property values' impact and found that property values' effect was negligible. He said they could do a visual rendering from different areas showing how the project will look from that specific point. He said, for instance, they can show what it will look like from Highway 73.

Councilman Thomas asked what the Church plans to do with the rest of the land. Since it is a large portion of 3000 acres to be used. Wes Quinton stated that it will still be under welfare control. It will always be used as a working ranch. Councilman Thomas noted that the sinks fill up with water in the winter, and he asked where the water will go. Melanie said she has looked at environmental studies, and there are a couple of options that still have not been decided on. A) berm the water on the north or east side B) Infiltration basin C) retention pond D) leave the water. Ryan Fitzpatrick stated that there is the possibility of leasing the water. Ryan noted that (SWCA, an environmental firm), will work with the Church to put together a water mitigation plan.

Councilman Panek stated that other solar companies show interest. What are the names of the other places you are working with? Unknown Speaker noted that these are under a non-disclosure agreement. He was given permission to say they are looking at one in Nephi. Adam can provide spots that are on the ground. Councilman Panek asked if this is expected to be a 35-year project. NEXtera stated that if it were phased out, it would be a 25 years project.

Councilwoman McKinney asked NEXtera and the Church what benefits the Town of Fairfield will receive from this project. She stated that the money is not what is attractive to the Town. Stefan Eckmann indicated that it would be clean energy, which will help since Utah has air quality issues. He also stated that he would like to work with the Town on things that will benefit the Town. NEXtera gave some examples of what they would like to do for the community. He said they could provide money towards the local school, local fire department, the museum, or sponsor events for Fairfield.

Councilman Panek asked NEXtera what type of businesses might follow the solar farms to Fairfield. NEXtera stated that other solar farms might follow and want to locate in this area too. He also said the solar farm could benefit tech companies in the area,

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Councilman Densley stated that there are many thousands of acres of solar farms going in throughout the valley. He asked why they all had different names. Stefan Eckmann noted that each project would be under a separate LLC. He explained that it is customary to put each project under a different LLC for ease of identification, contracting, and financing. He also stated that they are not part of Enyo's company.

Mr. Eckmann also said that they would be careful to make sure they are over one mile from any home as for the Church property. He also stated that phase 2 would not infringe on any homes either. Councilman Densley voiced his concerns about clean up and recycled environmental issues. Unknown NEXtera said that they had not seen any detrimental effects on wildlife. Shane Hill, Utah Department of Natural Resources, Wildlife Division, asked what the wildlife's long-term impact will be. He also asked if the project will be fenced. Mr. Hill went on to state that the pronghorn, mule deer, and the migrating bird could be affected. He said there is a migration corridor through the mule deer area to migrate from the Oquirrh Mountains to the south. Mr. Eckmann noted that it would be fenced. He also stated that it would be 2022-2023 before conducting an in-depth study of biological surveys. Melanie said that the old [solar] panels are valuable, and they do not want to throw them away.

Mayor Gurney stated that he was disappointed in the lack of tax dollars Fairfield will get. He said it is going to benefit everyone else in the county but Fairfield. He said the school in Cedar Fort would maybe get \$50 after Alpine School District divides it up with all of the other schools. Mayor Gurney also pointed out that Fairfield has a volunteer fire department that is not well trained, and they are not equipped to handle a battery fire. He continued by saying that Fairfield doesn't care about development, and he would like NEXtera to think about Fairfield and not the County.

Commissioner Lancaster asked about the sinks and how much water the Church owns since some water shares go with the sinks. She said that the Town could use some irrigation water, and she wondered if they could get some of that water. Melanie said the Church would be willing to work with the Town on the water shares.

Councilman Thomas stated that this benefits everyone else but Fairfield. He said he thinks it will impact the Town but will not provide any benefits for the Town. Councilman Thomas asked how Fairfield could benefit from the solar farm. Ryan Fitzpatrick stated that they are open to suggestions as this is a good location for their project.

Chairwoman Pringle stated that the Town would need to rezone the property. She said they would hold a public hearing and then send it to the Town Council, who would approve or disapprove of the rezoning.

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Councilwoman McKinney stated that she would like to see walking trails, a pool, or something geared toward recreation to make the community nicer but keeping it open.

Commissioner Riet said he would like to see something that brings value to Fairfield. He said that most people in Fairfield are still heating their homes with coal or propane. He said it would be great if they could bring natural gas to Fairfield. He said other possibilities are water, recreational opportunities, parks - something of value to the residents. He said they need to get something back.

Councilwoman McKinney said she would like to see something Fairfield could get excited about.

Councilman Thomas said he would like to see open space for public use. He suggested that they open some walking/horse trails, etc.

Ryan Fitzpatrick stated that what he hears then is that the Town is looking for public areas.

Chairwomen Pringle asked those present if they have any questions or concerns about solar farms. Several people voiced their opinions and concerns about having a solar farm in Fairfield. Some of the concerns were detrimental conditions for wildlife, water, dust, ruin the aesthetic of the valley, and property values. Some of them stated that they would like more information on solar panels' pros and cons to make an informed decision. It was pointed out that the majority of the people moved out here to be rural. Some stated that they do not want to develop the land. They also would like to have transparency throughout the process.

Stefan Eckmann gave a website that will have information posted about the solar farm.
<https://www.nexteraenergyresources.com/fairfield-solar.html>

Bettina Cameron from Economic Nature Wildlife Alliance stated that the sinks were wetlands and are protected, and you can not alter the water source of the wetlands. She went on and named different bird species. She stated that it is a complicated process to change wetlands. Stefan Eckman noted that they had done an equitable report study that said it was a non-jurisdictional wetland. Shane Hill (DWR) stated that was probably true.

Vern Carson said that the Fairfield Irrigation Company controls all of the water in Fairfield, and anything that is done has to be approved by them. (Supreme court case Fairfield Irrigation Company vs. Ken White 1965) He also said that the sinks are not considered wetlands. Vern also asked for a hold harmless agreement that they are not responsible for water flooding the farm for six months of the year.

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Mayor Gurney stated that this is just the beginning of a long process, and more information will be given as it becomes available in future meetings.

Mr. Hill stated that he would like to be involved in the process and any agreements made. He wants to make sure that they work with the County and State to provide corridors in Cedar Valley for the wildlife. He encouraged the Church and the Town to be good stewards of the land.

Mr. Quinton stated that this is the first time they have come and talked to the community.

Mr. Eckmann stated that they could hold an open house about the solar farm.

Commissioner Riet said that putting into the existing transmission lines may bring more companies to develop the area.

Mayor Gurney stated that NEXtera needs to bring something to the table for the Town.

AGENDA ITEM #4 - DISCUSSION ON OLD BUSINESS

Nothing was discussed.

AGENDA ITEM #5 - DISCUSSION ON NEW BUSINESS

Nothing was discussed.

AGENDA ITEM #6 - ADJOURN THE TOWN COUNCIL REGULAR SESSION MEETING.

Commissioner Lancaster made a motion to adjourn the Special Meeting. Commissioner Strong seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at 9:05 p.m.

Town Council: December 8, 2020

Planning Commission: February 9, 2021

Stephanie Shelley

Minutes approval date

Stephanie Shelley Town Recorder