

Howard County Solar Task Force Meeting – 7/14/2020

Minutes and Action Items

Attendees

Members: Amy Gowan; Cathy Hudson; Corey Ramsden; Dan Jacobs; Dani Phillips; Franny Yuhas; Howie Feaga; James Zoller; John Dove; Joy Levy; Keith Ohlinger; Kelly Hensing; Kevin Lucas
Guests: Leah Miller; Matt Hoover; Patrick Boddicker; Ted Mariani

Approval of Minutes

- Minutes for 6/30/2020 were approved with minor amendments.

Presentations

Leah Miller gave a presentation on the County's Solar Power Purchase Agreement with KDC Solar, and specifically discussed a potential project on ag pres land. She explained where various projects would be established, including canopies over parking lots, rooftop installations, and ground-mounted systems. Regarding the project on ag pres land, she discussed the benefits of the project, including the agricultural practices (sheep grazing, planting pollinator habitats, etc.) that would be incorporated. She also presented a preliminary draft of the configuration of solar panels on the farm property.

Discussion

The group discussed the impact of not meeting the original deadline of 7/1/2020 for submitting final recommendations. Keith Ohlinger specifically expressed that he did not believe that we had the authority as a Task Force to extend the deadline by an additional meeting, that only the County Council has that authority. He reached out to Diane Schwartz Jones, the Council Administrator, and she recommended getting an interpretation from the Office of Law. Keith shared that recommendation with the Task Force Chair and Vice-Chair and encouraged following through with that recommendation. Keith's concern was that members of the public could call into question the entire report if it changed the recommendations at an unapproved meeting. The co-chairs of the Task Force, based on discussions with other Task Force members, explained that there were multiple incomplete and/or rushed discussions and decisions in the 6/30/2020 meeting that warranted an additional meeting and further clarification. The majority of the members agreed that having one final meeting, even if past the deadline, was justified and necessary to ensure the final recommendations were agreed upon by all members.

Cathy Hudson clarified that the presentation of a specific solar project in this meeting would have no bearing on the Agricultural Land Preservation Board's consideration of this project in the future, if the project were to come before the Board. She also clarified that the solar project was not being presented by the project owner or solar company, only a representative of Howard County. Leah Miller confirmed this to be the case.

After Leah Miller's presentation, the group revisited the decision regarding utility scale projects (greater than 2 MW) on ag pres land. Similar to what was discussed in the 6/30/2020 meeting, there was

discussion regarding the concern that allowing utility-scale solar installations on ag pres land with conditions would be challenging to enforce over the lifetime of the project. The group did not recommend changing the decision made in the 6/30/2020 meeting to prohibit utility-scale installation on ag pres land.

The group then reviewed all of the other questions and responses, and made a few additional wording changes to clarify certain points. All of the documentation was reviewed one final time and the meeting was adjourned.

Action Items

- Dani Phillips to send out all final documentation for review.
- All Task Force members to review final documents and provide comments/approval.