SPECIAL MEETING: ZONING COMMISSION

JANUARY 19, 2023

**ZONING COMMISSION MEMBERS PRESENT**: Don Gatrell, Len Hall, Jerry Jacobs, Norm Yoder, Al Weaver, Mark Strumbly and Jan Helt (Secretary).

Also attending invited guest Mr. David Dietrich to guide us in our discussion of Solar Panels.

Meeting opened at 7:00pm.

**Mr. Gatrell** talked about definitions regarding Substitute Bill Number 52 enacted by the General Assembly of the State of Ohio. (see attached)

**Mr. Gatrell** asked Mr. Dietrich what the count was between a small scale and a large scale Solar Panel Facility**.**

**Mr. Dietrich** stated the following:

“Large solar facility” means an electric generating plant that consists of solar panels and associated with a single interconnection to the electric grid that is a major utility facility. A large solar panel facility based on megawatts would be 50 or more.

Mr. Dietrich stated he has not heard of much interest in wind farms. Middlefield Village has talked about some interest in solar panels but no one else in Geauga County has mentioned an interest. Also be aware the state could designate areas to allow solar panels.

**Mr. Gatrell** asked Mr. Dietrich “Where does our authority come in if we decide to write something up for zoning could it be overrode by the state”?

**Mr. Dietrich** said that a large scale facility could be over rode by the county. Geauga County has not done that yet. Also, this Bill 52 allows for a referendum to allow Townships to vote on. No one has done anything like that in this area. He said you do not have to allow solar panels in your Parkman Township if you don’t want it. People have individual panels on there property now which Parkman zoning allows. These large facilities would be for commercial industry. These would be used to designate power only.

There are a couple of ways you could handle addressing solar panels. You could also list it as a permitted use, zoning inspector would issue a permit. You could go with a variance which would be issued through the BZA. The variance would be for 5 years or change of owner ship of the property. The way to start maybe would be to have a public meeting and get the communities opinion if they want small or large solar panel facilities in their community.

**Mr. Dietrich** stated another option would be a little more complicated is to let them apply for a variance, it would be approved or denied. If denied it would probably go to a court case. At this point the trustees could allow solar panels with stipulations. If there were any issues in future with the solar facility site they could be held in contempt of court. Those are all your options.

**Mr. Gatrell** stated: “If it is not written in Parkman Township’s zoning it is not allowed”. Parkman Township would be represented by Geauga County Prosecutors. There is also a public hearing, the judge would also hold a public hearing. At the last meeting it seemed like some people were for allowing solar panel facilities in our community. You can’t really beautify it with trees they would eventually interfere with the sun the panels need. We could require what ever we wanted.

**Mr. Dietrich** said it would take anywhere from 3 to 6 months to get anything done depending on what is decided we want to do about solar panel facilities.

**Mr. Dietrich** said Court Judgement Entry (CJE) would cover a lot of things, sometimes you can’t think of all the scenarios, with CJE you write it up for that particular property. Every situation is different. You can put whatever restrictions you want on any property. That would be the safest way to go for Parkman Township. Over 5o megawatts means over 100 or more acres. Do you have the land?

**Mr. Hall** said Kent State has one that supplements their personal use only on all their locations. They plan on adding more it supplements 26% to 34% of the electric usage.

**Mr. Jacobs** stated that Northern Union county has a huge sub-station. They are all commercial use only. There are quite a few of them in that corridor.

**Mr. Gatrell** stated plowing everything down and putting solar panels in is getting rid of a lot of green space. Not so sure about that being a good idea.

**Mr. Jacobs** stated that Union Township was approved before SB 52 was in effect. There were some people that were upset but most were for it. If a company has a lease on the land and they pull out they agreed to put the land back to the way it was before solar panels.

**Mr. Dietrich** said they are to post a bond so the money is there if they shut down a facility so they can put it back the way it was before solar panels.

**Mr. Gatrell** asked if there were any information on the size of the panels.

**Mr. Yoder** asked how many panels could be put on an acre of land.

**Mr. Dietrich** said he had no answer for those questions. Maybe we should contact a solar panel company and see if they will come in and give us more information.

**Mr. Strumbly** suggested maybe we get in touch with the person who runs the solar panel business in Lords town.

**Mr. Gatrell** said he will reach out and find someone who would be willing to come and talk to us about solar panels. That would really help us to make a decision on what we should do and how to proceed. He also stated that at this point he felt that CJE would benefit the Parkman Township the most money wise, is the way it looks right now.

**Mr. Jacobs** said the school district and the township both would make money and benefit from solar panel facility in Parkman.

**Mr. Dietrich** said the facilities would be under the Geauga County building department.

**Mr. Gatrell** said windmills are taller and not good for large birds , a lot of them have already closed, now they are just a stump farm. They may not even want to come here we would most likely get 60% solar energy compared to 90% elsewhere.

**Mr. Hall** asked what about vegetation, how would they handle that. Using chemicals would not be a good idea. They would have to keep up with it somehow.

Someone suggested goats.

**Mr. Dietrich** stated he has no idea, but that is a great question.

**Mr. Gatrell** said maintenance would be a concern for sure. We can designate certain districts we have a lot of agriculture in our residential areas in Parkman Township. We do not have a lot of industrial areas.

**Mr. Jacobs** said route 168 has a large industrial area with multiple owners.

**Mr. Gatrell** said bigger chunks of land in Parkman Township are pretty much covered.

**Mr. Dietrich** said these are all good points, it also means maybe this area would not work for large solar panels facilities.

**Mr. Jacobs** said they have a lot of farmlands in Northern Ohio. They have a lot of space for solar panels.

**Mr. Gatrell** went over different areas in the APA Planning for Utility-Scale Solar Energy Facilities. Most of them are big areas.

**Mr. Jacobs** said they stay away from water shed and those types of areas.

**Mr. Dietrich** said First Energy maybe has someone who can go over somethings and could come to our meeting and discuss solar panels. Nobody knows a lot about them right now.

**Mr. Gatrell** stated we do not want an eyesore anywhere in Parkman. Feasible land we have may not be enough to put solar panels.

**Mr. Hall** stated First Energy has a whole department on solar panels lead by Joseph Mc Callen.

**Mr. Duchscherer** gave Mr. Gatrell some information from BT Solar a phone number to call to see if he can get someone to come out and talk to ZC about solar panels.

**Mr. Hall** said different companies as with gas drilling offer more and some less money to put up solar panels. He said Kent State has 4 mega watts and intends to put 6 more mega watts solar panels up. He said it has reduced their intake of electricity by 25 to 36%.

**Mr. Gatell** said the Zoning Commission will meet next week on Wednesday January 25 at 7:00pm our regular date and time. He will also try to get someone to come and speak at our meeting about solar panels.

**Mr. Detrich** said he would like to attend if we find some one to come out.

We will see everyone next week.

Respectfully Submitted,

Jan Helt\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Don Gatrell\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Parkman Township Commission Secretary Chairperson