

**RIGA PLANNING COMMISSION REGULAR MEETING**

February 3, 2020

Meeting open: 7:03 pm by Chairman Karg

Roll call was taken and members were present as noted:

B. Bowman	D. Gilliland
K. Goetz	R. Karg
S. Abbott	T. Roach (zoning administrator)

Member(s) absent:

None

Registered public guest present (and township of residence):

Tom Creque	Sylvania	Shane Fischer	Riga
Jeff Creque	Sylvania	David Dangler	Riga
Kelly Heidbreder	Woodstock	Beth Holland	Riga
Cary Iffland	(Ottawa Lake)	Anita Gozdziwski	Riga
Wm Strouse	Riga	Ed Griffich	Riga
Jamie Frank	Deerfield	Ray Soff	
Paul Wohlfarth	Riga	Robin Soff	
Lynn Keller	Blissfield	Kevon Martis	Riga
Amy Keller	Blissfield	Chad Hine	Riga
Eric Keller	Deerfield	Shannon Andrix	Deerfield
Lindsay Latre	(Florida-ESA)	Steve Andrix	Deerfield
Henry Smith	Riga	Renee Gordon	Deerfield
Jeff Ehlert	Blissfield	Robert Gordon	Deerfield
Duane Goetz	Palmyra	Matt Gordon	Deerfield
James Strahan	Riga	Jack Karl	Riga
Deborah O Reilly	(Ottawa Lake)	Dean Shidler	Deerfield
Brent Lievens	Riga	Jill Shidler	Deerfield
Greg Lievens	Petersburg	Dan Schwyn	Riga
Terry Iott	Petersburg	Janet Goetz	Riga
Lee Andre	Raisin	Jacqueline Salsbury	Riga
Adam Iffland	Blissfield	Kaye Bowman	Riga
John M Karth	Deerfield		
Ron Tilman	Sylvania		
Charlie Arler	Riga		

Item #1: Reports were presented:

A. Minutes from Last Month’s Regular Meeting

1. B. Bowman moved with support from K. Goetz to dispense with the reading of the minutes. All members present supported and motion carried. K. Goetz moved with support from B. Bowman to approve the minutes as amended. All members present supported and motion carried.

B. Communications:

1. None.

C. Zoning administrator's report.

1. T. Roach noted there was one barn inspection.

Item #2: Public Request on Zoning Issues:

- A. Chairman R. Karg noted that comments regarding the solar ordinance will be addressed under Public Comments after New Business. Chairman Karg asked if there was anyone who had a need regarding a zoning issue. None was requested.

Item #3: New Business (New Business was moved forward in accordance with the Agenda.)

A. Solar Installation Moratorium

1. Chairman Karg noted Riga Township presently has a Solar Ordinance that was passed in April of 2019. Prior to June of 2019, land that was in PA116 would not be permitted to be used for a commercial solar installation. Chairman Karg noted the Planning Commission recommended to the Township Board to create a moratorium on commercial solar installations until the revised State of Michigan ruling was discussed. Chairman Karg shared a map of land in Riga Township that was in PA116.
2. Chairman Karg also noted items that should be discussed regarding the existing ordinance:
  - a. Does the existing requirements for a bond have enough teeth to protect the citizens of Riga?
  - b. Does the existing requirements for landscaping maintenance have teeth?
  - c. Should there be an application for each parcel by the property owners?
  - d. Should there be a minimum lot coverage requirement?
  - e. Should the ordinance include a way to address citizen complaints?
  - f. Does the proposed development meet the Riga Zoning Ordinance of minimum lot area?
  - g. Does the proposed development meet the Riga Zoning Ordinance of minimum lot width?

Item #4: Public Comment

A. Public comment on the proposed solar installation:

1. Jack Karl (Riga) – would not like to see solar everywhere.
2. Renee Gordon (Deerfield) – solar installation is not farming.
3. Ray Soff (?) – shared that where the pipe lines went through the ground was never the same because plants can't grow.
4. Paul Wohlfarth (Riga)- The governor changed the rules because she was lobbied by farmers. The ground will not be a brown field because there will not be industrial waste. There will be bonds for repair of the ground.
5. Kevon Martis (Riga)- The reversal of PA116 was driven by the solar industry. There is 2 ½ square miles of solar proposed in Deerfield and 2 square miles proposed in Riga. It is unknown at this time how many square miles are proposed in Ogden. If the solar installation never changes, it will be here way into the future. Why would it be removed? It will never be farm use. There will be an unknown impact on the land because of the heavy equipment and disrupted drainage tile.

6. Lindsay Latre (ESA developer- Florida)- This will not be our first development. We have developed properties all over the United States. The term of our lease is not forever; it will be for 35 years. The governor's office requires a decommissioning bond that they will hold till the term of the lease which is 35 years. (K. Goetz asked why is the price per acre for the land so high?) Because they sell energy and the land will not be used for farming for 35 years. There cannot be a third-party seller of energy. (B. Bowman asked if after 35 years, can there be a transfer of the property?) Yes, there can but at the end of the lease, the equipment has to be removed. (B. Bowman asked how do we know if it will be fixed?) The bond will be used to fix it. (B. Bowman asked what is their largest installation?) Our largest installation is 600 acres. (B. Bowman asked why here in Michigan?) Because the Michigan legislature requires solar installations. (R. Karg asked how does decommissioning work?) The developer pays to renew a bond every year. There is an independent engineering firm that calculates and takes into account inflation to determine dollar amount of bond. The governor's office will hold the bond. (R. Karg asked if they have installation now with animals grazing below the panels?) They have installations in North Carolina with animal grazing beneath the panels. (R. Karg asked how many acres do they have in the southeast Michigan?) In the Deerfield-Riga development they have 1700 acres proposed. (K. Goetz noted that there will be more than two trips a week if there are sheep beneath the panels for water and feed and their grazing areas should be rotated. K. Goetz also asked what is the State of Michigan's mandate for alternative energy?) The State of Michigan's mandate for alternative energy is 100% by the year 2050. Presently the state is at 15% of that mandate. (K. Goetz asked if they take water rights to clean the panel?) No, the panels are self-cleaning. (K. Goetz asked when are they anticipating to be completed?) They are anticipating to be completed by the year 2024 or 2025. They will have to acquire the permits from two townships. (K. Goetz asked what is the setbacks?) They are planning to be 150' from any residence and an additional 50' to the start of the panels.
7. Jeff Creque (Sylvania)- shared that he farms in many townships. He did his research and from others who did this recommended that the panels are set 25' apart for better growth beneath the panels.
8. Steve Andrix (Deerfield) – noted that he is a farmer. He would be not for the installation to protect those who live nearby and are not developing. He is not against the installation but is concern about the size. He is concern and wants to be sure that his neighbors have a way to resolve a complaint.
9. Jamie Frank (Deerfield) – It is the landowners land and it their choice of what to do with it.
10. Lee Andre (Raisin) – noted that the posts are aluminum. What is the absorption rate of the soil during the use? Would there be shadows with a 100' setback? They should not be required to combined the parcels.
11. Jeff Creque (Sylvania) – the solar installation will create less fertilizer runoff.
12. Lee Andre (Raisin) – noted that he has been on the board of the County Conservation of Soil and Water and also on a National Committee and the solar installation will hold the soil in place, the developer pick the plants for the pollinators, there should be a filter strip along rivers which will improve water, there is a co-benefit in place, and the installation will help the aquifer by holding the water on site.
13. Renee Gordon (Deerfield) – there will be toxic waste at the end of the panel life.
14. Tom Creque (Sylvania) – is part of Sylvania Township Planning Commission and this decision affect 27,000 people.

- 15. Kevon Martis (Riga) – There should be a percentage of coverage restriction to preserve agriculture as suggested by the Riga Township Master Plan. What is the insurance there will be no noise complaints? If there is no enforcement fee in the ordinance, there will be no protection. Solar companies are speculators.
- 16. Lindsay Litre (ESA developer – Florida)- As developer everything will be in writing. The insurance is the purpose of the bond. If the system is inoperable for 12 months, the governor’s office will pull the bond. This is the requirement for projects in PA116. They locate the invertors in the center of the field. If someone hears it, they will move it. It will be a minimum of 150 meters from the property line.
- 17. Shane Fischer (Riga) – has a concern for his young family regarding any possible noise. How the solar panels will affect wildlife and their ability to see the sunsets.

Item #5: Old Business

A. Working on Zoning Ordinance Format

- 1. Planning Commission will continue work at a later date.

Item #6: Public Comment

A. No public comment.

Item #7: Open Items

A. The following item(s) are open:

- 1. Previous Mitchell property-status of proposed residence.

Item #8: Options for Goals for 2020:

- A. Buffer zone requirements
- B. Light Ordinance
- C. Trailer Park Zoning District
- D. Define pets
- E. Master Plan Amendment (2021)
- F. Expanding home base businesses

Chairman Karg noted that the next regular meeting will be Monday, March 2, 2020 at 7:00 pm. Being no other business, Chairman Karg entertained a motion to adjourn. B. Bowman moved to adjourn and S. Abbott seconded the motion. All members present supported the motion. Chairman Karg adjourned the meeting at 9:02 pm.