

MINUTES OF THE TOWN OF WASHINGTON
PLAN COMMISSION MEETING
August 11, 2021, 5:00 PM

Members Present: Greg Fahrman Dustin Hurtgen, Don Perry, Bob Solberg, John Steensland, Karen Tomesh

Town Staff Present: None

County Staff Present: Rod Eslinger

Members/Staff Absent: Amy Alpine

1 Approve Minutes of the March 11, 2020 Plan Commission Meeting

Hold to next meeting as minutes were not in packet.

2 Approved Ordinance 2021-07-15: Temporary Moratorium on Development of Wind Energy Systems

Plan Commission members were furnished with a copy of the ordinance.

2 Wind Energy – Rod Eslinger, Director of Eau Claire Planning & Development, Documents & Study Plan

Rod Eslinger gave background information as to why this topic is being brought to the Plan Commission. A company called Renewable Wind Energy (RWE) is looking to establish a 200 mega watt wind farm in Eau Claire County which first involved the towns of Pleasant Valley and Clear Creek; the focus has now expanded into the towns of Washington, Lincoln, Bridge Creek, and Otter Creek. There have been wind easements recorded with Eau Claire County that give rights to the landowner and contractor if and when they decide to move forward. The easements give them the ability to locate the infrastructure which could be the wind turbines and/or underground utilities.

Eau Claire County staff met with the company back in 2018 or 2019 and at that time they were looking a 200 mega watt site with 40-70 wind turbines approximately 500 ft. in height in Pleasant Valley and Clear Creek. Eau Claire County does not have the wind speed as some of the other parts of the state; however, there is a transmission line that runs through Eau Claire County that makes it very favorable.

Eau Claire County developed standards in 2007 that do not meet the current Wisconsin PSA 128. The County is currently updating their codes and will be adopting PSA 128.

If wind facilities are over 100 mega watts in capacity the permitting process is through the Public Service Commission Board. The would not be a public hearing but there could be a informational meeting at the County and Town level.

The Town has control over driveway authority, road use regulations, licensing ordinances and agreements, storm water and erosion control, and access authority. The County would issue land use permits and electrical permits.

Authority to restrict systems are limited to: serves to preserve and protect public health and safety, does not significantly increase the cost of the system or decrease its efficiency, and allows for an alternative system of comparable cost and efficiency. Any restrictions should be backed by scientific research.

Plan Commission members asked questions and discussed options for the Town.

The County and the Town would receive a set quota payment from the company if and when the wind turbines are up and running.

3 John Steensland informed the Plan Commission he will be resigning due to moving out of the Town of Washington on October 3, 2021.

4 Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 6:09 p.m.