



AMHERST COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING



MINUTES

October 25, 2022

Administrative Office Complex
153 Washington Street
Public Meeting Room
Meeting Convened - 7:00 PM

1. Call to Order

MEMBERS PRESENT: Leslie Gamble (Chair), Derin Foor (Vice Chair), Jim Thompson, Michael Martineau, Michael Bryant, Beverly Jones, Annalyn Burley (Youth Participant-Non Voting) and Calvin Kennon (EDA Liaison-Non Voting).

MEMBERS ABSENT: David Pugh (Board Liaison-Non Voting).

STAFF PRESENT: Jeremy Bryant (Interim County Administrator), Stacey Stinnett (Administrative Assistant), Tyler Creasy and Nate Young (Interim Community Development Directors)

Madam Chair Gamble called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm.

2. Approval of Agenda

Planning Commission Recommendation:

Motion: Motion to approve the agenda.

Motion made by: Jones

Second: Foor

Motion carried by a 6-0 vote.

3. Invocation & Pledge of Allegiance

Thompson led in prayer.

Madam Chair Gamble led the Pledge of Allegiance.

4. Citizens Comments

There were none.

5. Youth Participant Discussion

A. Questions

Tyler introduced Annalyn Burley, a junior at Amherst County High School and a native of Amherst County, to the Planning Commission.

Mr. Creasy reminded the Planning Commission that this was a non-voting position and the term would be from October 2022 to May 2023.

Miss Burley was interviewed by the Planning Commission for the vacant Youth Participant seat.

Planning Commission Recommendation:

Motion: Motion to appoint Annalyn Burley as the Youth Participant on the Planning Commission.

Motion made by: Thompson

Second: M. Bryant

Motion carried by a 6-0 vote.

6. Public Hearing - Special Exception

A. 2022-489 Inmer Estrada

Request by Inmer Estrada for a special exception request in the B-2 General Commercial District. The purpose of the special exception is to allow the fabricating of granite countertops. The request included display of countertops in the front yard and storage of countertops in the rear yard. The property is located at 1340 North Amherst Highway and is further identified as tax map number 83-A-16A.

Mr. Creasy presented the staff report and recommended approval with the following conditions:

1. Lighting: If exterior lighting is provided, all proposed lighting shall be glare-shielded and directed so as to prevent illumination across the property line.
2. Outdoor storage: No miscellaneous items shall be stored outside other than the granite slabs at the two established locations.
3. Entrances: The applicant will be responsible to obtain all necessary permits from the Virginia Department of Transportation.

4. Use: The use of the parcel shall be in conformance with the advertised use as part of the special exception request.
5. Landscaping: The site shall maintain all existing trees and include the minimum amount of plantings as prescribed in section 1605 of the County's landscaping ordinance and shall provide either cash escrow, letter of credit or bond for the required landscaping.
6. No more than 5 racks or 250 slabs of granite, which-ever is greater, can be stored at either of the two locations.
7. Parking: No more than twenty (20) vehicles (including trailers, campers and similar units) may be parked on the lot at any one time. This shall include parking from the existing automotive repair garage.

Madam Chair Gamble opened the public hearing.

Mark McGruder, a resident of Amherst County, spoke in favor of the request.

Ella McGruder, a resident of Amherst County, spoke in favor of the request.

Inmer Estrada, the applicant, spoke in favor of the request.

Mike Brockman, adjoining property owner, spoke in favor of the request.

Bill Masencup, the property owner, spoke in favor of the request. However, Mr. Masencup felt the landscaping requirements were too strict and the applicant was concerned that the foliage could damage the granite products on display.

There being no further speakers, Madam Chair Gamble closed the public hearing.

There was a brief discussion amongst the Planning Commission regarding the landscaping recommendations.

Mr. Kennon encouraged the Planning Commission to vote in favor because Amherst County needs more businesses at this end of the county.

Planning Commission Recommendation:

Motion to approve 2022-489 Inmer Estrada with staff recommendations.

Motion made by: Jones

Second: Thompson

Motion carried by a 6-0 vote.

B. 2022-511 Partridge Creek, Solar LLC

Request by Partridge Creek Solar, LLC for a special exception request in the R-1 Limited Residential District for a solar energy system, utility-scale. The project site will utilize the parcels 141.322 total acres, with approximately 85 acres being utilized for the solar arrays. The parcel has frontage on Izaak Walton Road and the Route 29 Bypass and is further identified as tax map number 139-A-54.

Mr. Creasy presented the staff report and recommended approval with the following conditions:

1. Site Plan: The use shall be in general conformance with the approved site plan.
2. Lighting: If exterior lighting is provided, all proposed lighting shall be glare-shielded and directed so as to prevent illumination across the property line.
3. Outdoor storage: No miscellaneous items shall be stored outside other than the solar panels and ancillary equipment that is part of the approved use.
4. Entrances: The applicant will be responsible for obtaining all necessary permits from the Virginia Department of Transportation.
5. Use: The use of the parcel shall be in conformance with the advertised use as part of the special exception request.
6. Landscaping: The site shall maintain all existing trees and proposed trees as shown on the conceptual site plan. Should any screening trees cease to exist during the life of the proposed solar farm, such trees shall immediately be replanted at the start of the next planting season.
7. Parking: No more than twenty (20) vehicles (including trailers, campers and similar units) may be parked on the lot at any one time.
8. All necessary environmental approvals shall be obtained prior to the issuance of the zoning permit. These approvals include the following but are not limited to:
 - a. Wetland disturbance / impacts - US Army Corps of Engineers
 - b. Storm water - Department of Environmental Quality
 - c. Erosion and Sediment Control - Department of Environmental Quality

Dan Band, representative from Sun Tribe Development LLC in Charlottesville, spoke in favor of the request. Mr. Band gave a Power Point presentation and touched on the following topics: Benefits of Solar projects to Amherst County, Buffering and Setbacks, Environment and Wildlife, Construction, Operation and Decommissioning.

Madam Chair Gamble opened the public hearing.

Crystal Burks, an adjoining property resident, spoke in favor of the request. Mrs. Burks stated that she would rather see a solar farm on this property than houses. She stated that a solar farm was a perfect idea for this property and it would not impact the neighborhood.

Billy Mays, a citizen of Amherst County, spoke in favor of the request, stating that this is a good natural source of energy.

Skyler Zunk, Co-founder of Energy Right, spoke in favor of the request. Mr. Zunk spoke about the benefits of solar energy to the county as well as to the environment.

There being no further speakers, Madam Chair Gamble closed the public hearing.

Calvin Kennon, EDA representative, urged the Planning Commission to support this project and reminded the Commission that this project funds Amherst County with revenue.

The Planning Commission had a brief discussion regarding buffering around the site and the road site views.

Planning Commission Recommendation:

Motion to approve 2022-511 Partridge Creek Solar LLC with staff recommendations and adding a 40 ft vegetative buffer (10 ft on center) along where the project fronts Monacan Parkway and the bypass.

Motion made by: Foor

Second: Thompson

Motion carried by a 6-0 vote.

7. Site Plan Updates

A. Site Plan Attachments

Mr. Creasy updated the Planning Commission on the current site plans in the office.

8. Old/New Business

Mr. J. Bryant introduced Tyler Creasy and Nate Young as the Co-Interim Community Development Director's while he is filling in as the Interim County Administrator.

There was a brief discussion regarding the status of the permits for the property located across from 84 Lumber, the Scottish Inn remaining structure, Madison Heights Town Centre and the High School zoning in the Town of Amherst.

9. Approval of Minutes for September 15, 2022

A. Minutes

Planning Commission Recommendation:

Motion to approve the September 15, 2022 Meeting Minutes as submitted.

Motion made by: Jones

Second: Thompson

Motion carried by a 4-0 vote (Martineau and Foor absent)

10. Adjournment

There being no further business to conduct, the meeting was adjourned at 8:35 pm.

Planning Commission Recommendation:

Motion to adjourn.

Motion made by: Gamble

Second: Martineau

Motion carried by a 6-0 vote.