



**SCOTT COUNTY
PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION
Tuesday, January 18, 2022
5:00 P.M.**

MEETING MINUTES

1st Floor Board Room
600 West 4th Street
Davenport, IA 52801

MEMBERS PRESENT: Joan Maxwell*, Steve Piatak, Lori Rochau, Carolyn Scheibe, Hans Schneklath, Kurt Steward*

MEMBERS ABSENT: Easton Armstrong

Zoning Board of Adjustment

MEMBERS PRESENT: Heather Jordahl, Whitney Kylo, Mary Beth Madden, Myron Scheibe

MEMBERS ABSENT: Tom Dittmer

Board of Supervisors

MEMBERS PRESENT: Ken Beck, Ken Croken, Brinson Kinzer, Tony Knobbe, John Maxwell*

STAFF PRESENT: Chris Mathias, Planning & Development Director
Alan Sabat, Planning & Development Specialist
Bailey Van Hoe, Senior Office Assistant
Mahesh Sharma, County Administrator*
David Farmer, Budget & Administrative Services Director*
Mary Thee, Assistant County Administrator*

OTHERS PRESENT: One (1) member of the press

**Some members and staff participated virtually.*

1. **Call to Order:** Chair Scheibe called the meeting to order at 5:00 P.M.
2. **Minutes:** Consideration of November 16, 2021 meeting minutes. **Piatak made a motion to approve. Seconded by Rochau. Vote: All Ayes (6-0)**

3. **Joint Meeting: Mathias** said there continues to be interest in locating a utility-scale solar operation in or near Scott County, and explained that the current Zoning Ordinance and Comprehensive Plan addressed renewable energy, but the regulations within the Ordinance address only residential-scale wind and solar energy. **Mathias** said since the Comprehensive Plan contains both an objective to plan for renewable energy and an objective to preserve productive agricultural land, the County would need to consider the impacts allowing and expanding renewable energy operations would have on the objective to preserve agricultural land.

Mathias presented a Corn Suitability Rating (CSR) map of Scott County, which shows high ratings (60+) across the majority of the County, and the Zoning map, which shows the almost the entirety of the highly-rated land within the Agricultural-Preservation (A-P) Zoning district. **Mathias** then showed a CSR map highlighting only the areas with CSR ratings under 60, proposing that perhaps the County could consider limiting utility-scale renewable energy uses to only those areas. **Mathias** finished by saying he envisioned either implementing a new “Floating zone” district in the Ordinance that could regulate utility-scale renewable energy uses (which would be preferred), or creating a new Special Use Permit option for proposed projects.

John Maxwell asked why the proposed threshold was 60 CSR. **Knobbe** said it was, historically, the dividing line between A-P and Agricultural-General (A-G) zones. **John Maxwell** said he felt 60 seemed pretty high and suggested 50 CSR instead. **Joan Maxwell** asked if slope could also be a standard to limit loss of “flat black.” **Mathias** said the utility company approaching the County has been pretty clear that it is only interested in a flat site.

John Maxwell reiterated that the utility company’s stated interest is to be near existing grid infrastructure, which **Chair Scheibe** and **Steward** agreed was not a good enough standard for site selection. **Beck** pointed out most of the sites near existing substations would be zoned A-P.

Knobbe asked what was known about the decommissioning process. **Mathias** said the representative from Alliant who attended the September 7, 2021 Commission meeting couldn’t forecast how that process would unfold, which he acknowledged was a concern.

Jordahl asked whether there was a minimum amount of land Alliant was seeking for the project. **Mathias** said other existing projects were at minimum 800-1,000 acres. **Jordahl** said at that scale, she would want more information about decommissioning before moving forward.

Joan Maxwell took issue with a point the Alliant representative made at the September 7th meeting: that they wanted to locate somewhere that wouldn’t be “limiting development in established cities.” **Maxwell** said the proposed site to the west of Davenport *would*, in fact, limit development for the established city of Davenport.

Croken said he believed the County should engage with Alliant more so there weren’t any assumptions about what their positions were.

Myron Scheibe said if it were made part of a development agreement, the County may be forced to decommission the site on its own.

Kinzer said he understood the balancing act between helping the consumer and protecting agricultural land, and expressed interest in lowering the CSR threshold.

Kyllo asked whether the goal was to attract or repel utility-scale projects. **Mathias** said that was the challenge presented in the Comprehensive Plan: we're trying to plan for renewable energy while also preserving farmland.

Chair Scheibe said the first priority of the Comprehensive Plan is to preserve agricultural land.

Croken said we have the best soil on the planet and it was crucial to preserve it, but that coping with climate change is a very urgent motivation for trying to open the County to renewable energy projects. **Chair Scheibe** responded that the production of solar panels themselves is not environmentally friendly and that there were many urban locations for siting them such as above parking lots. **Croken** responded that he wanted to do what he could for his grandkids and the County's policies have to show that they were trying.

Beck said it's clear everyone's top priority is agricultural preservation. But if the County is going to tell utility companies where they *can't* locate, it also has to tell them where they *can*. Then it's up to the companies to tell the County they're not interested instead of the other way around.

Knobbe said he agreed, and that he wanted the regulations regarding how the CSR ratings are calculated to be very clear.

Kyllo said she found utility-scale solar projects in southern Minnesota unsightly and would rather see hog barns.

Joan Maxwell reminded staff that there were other renewable energy production options to address besides solar.

Mathias said he intended to further investigate the parcels highlighted in the "under 60 CSR" map to see what they actually looked like in terms of CSR rating distribution and topography, and also to reengage with Alliant to see how feasible a project would be within those areas.

4. **Other Business:** **Joan Maxwell** said she felt the existing minimum lot size standards were not realistic for accommodating modern septic systems. **Joan Maxwell** also said the site clearing process undergone during development was leading to too much soil loss. **Knobbe** said of the latter that losses would be very difficult to measure and even more difficult to enforce.
5. **Adjournment:** With no further public comments and no other business to discuss, Chair Scheibe adjourned the meeting at 5:55 P.M.