

Minutes: Russell Township Zoning Commission
Russell Fire-Rescue Station
June 23, 2010

Present: Richard E. Snyder, Chairman
Bruce Murphy
Donna Weiss Carson
Ben Kotowski (arrived at 8:00 p.m.)
Diana Steffen, Secretary

Wendy Bruzas was absent with apologies.

The Chairman noted there was a quorum and called the meeting to order at 7:41 p.m.

MINUTES OF MAY 26, 2010 – *Ms. Weiss Carson made the motion to approve the minutes, Mr. Murphy seconded and the motion passed unanimously by 3-0.*

WIND AND SOLAR ENERGY – Resident Brett Anderson was in attendance at his request to discuss an amendment to handle wind turbines and solar panels. He said he already has a small wind turbine and solar panels at his residential property, and would like to erect a higher wind tower in compliance with zoning and without having to apply for a variance. Height is the biggest issue. He handed out a specification sheet for a wind turbine system that showed they are a viable choice for electricity in Russell Township. The unit would need to be a minimum of 120 feet in height. The specifications showed a substantial amount of electrical power can be generated from a wind turbine, for example with a wind speed of about six meters per second the output is about 600 watts. Mr. Anderson said that his solar array produces 1900 watts which is 25% of his home's electricity. A turbine provides more since it works 24 hours a day whereas a solar array only works during the daytime.

Mr. Anderson said that the blade length for a small unit would be two meters, and a residential unit with a 24 to 30 mph wind speed will provide 3.5 kilowatts. He explained that these smaller blades make less noise than the large commercial wind turbines, and that his current turbine has 28-inch blades and with a 20 mph wind the blades cannot be heard at the bottom of the tower. He would like to have a much higher one where the blades are bigger and spin slower. They are narrow at the tip and can break the sound barrier at the tip but are much slower at the hub, and cannot be heard. The big commercial turbines can be heard. All turbines are designed the same way and noise is the paramount concern. Vibration must be kept down since some are installed on the roof of a house.

Mr. Anderson said he would like to know if the Commission has questions that he could research and bring back answers. The Commission then discussed the issue. Mr. Murphy commented that a standard limitation for a wind tower is that the setback from property lines must be a minimum of 1.1 times the combined height of the tower and one blade. Mr. Anderson said his 2.1-acre lot is 200 feet wide and 540 feet deep, and he could locate a tower more than that ratio on the west side, away from the neighbor, if he requested a variance on the east side where it would be about 90 feet. That side has a wooded buffer between his lot and the church next door.

Mr. Murphy said there is a County Model zoning regulation that is being used in Geauga County. It allows for the Township to dictate the maximum height of towers. He also said he has spoken with installers of wind and solar equipment in Ohio, and they say that solar energy is economically feasible whereas wind is too inconsistent and does not provide the economic payback. Mr. Anderson explained that for him the payback is not important. Due to many electrical blackouts at his home in the past he uses the solar panels to provide electricity to recharge the battery backups, but these cannot work at night when storms often happen, so he would like to use wind which would provide the most energy during storms.

Mr. Kotowski arrived at this time. Resident Al Klauss stated that his only concern was the matter of noise, how far it would travel, how much would be acceptable, and that it not travel onto a neighbor's property.

He asked the Commission to research this issue. Mr. Anderson said the life of a wind turbine is 20 to 25 years and it is maintenance free. He suggested using monopoles only which are not a hazard to birds and are aesthetically more attractive than lattice towers.

Mr. Snyder reported that Ms. Bruzas had called the Geauga County Building Department regarding solar panels and was told by Steve Ross that they do review them, including roof mounted ones since they add to the roof load. They always need electrical permits. Mr. Ross suggested the Commission look at lot coverage since nothing grows under them, and also at the question of whether solar panels should be considered a structure since they are pedestal mounted.

Action Item: Mr. Anderson agreed to research the issue of noise for wind turbines and to return to the Commission at the next meeting.

CONSERVATION EASEMENT ZONING – Mr. Murphy had drafted a letter to send out to landowners who have conservation easements on their properties, and Mrs. Steffen had added a response sheet. The Commission reviewed these and made minor changes. The letter will be sent out shortly and if no response is received it may be resent in October.

Action Item: Mrs. Steffen will finalize the mailing for the Chairman's signature and mail it out.

FOOD SERVICE OPERATIONS – The Commission completed its review of the draft amendment.

Action Item: Mr. Kotowski will rewrite the Buffer Zone section and Mrs. Steffen will make the other changes agreed tonight.

ESTABLISHMENT OF ZONES – Mr. Snyder said he has questions to ask a professional surveyor who has not yet responded to him. He hopes to have some answers by the next meeting.

LAUREL SCHOOL PROPERTY – The Commission discussed the Laurel School property on Fairmount Road in light of the new waterline and the private sewage treatment system on the property. There is a question as to the possible use of the land if Laurel School decided to sell it in the future. The Commission discussed rezoning the property to a new school zone or asking for a conservation easement.

Action Item: Mr. Murphy will talk with Trustee liaison Jim Dickinson about this property.

There being no other business, Mr. Murphy moved to adjourn, Mr. Kotowski seconded and the meeting adjourned at 9:58 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Diana Steffen
Secretary

Date

Richard E. Snyder
Chairman

Date