



**COUNTY COMMISSIONERS**

Patrick Folsom, Chairman (District 2)

James Maxwell, Vice (District 5)

Myra Exum (District 4)

Willie Cody (District 3)

Lee Larko (District 1)

**COUNTY STAFF**

Patricia Williams, County Clerk

Kim Daniels, Human Resources

James Burchett/Jason Kemp, County Attorneys

**Brooks County Board of Commissioners**

**Town Hall Meeting**

**Thursday, September 12, 2024 @ 6:00pm**

**Brooks County Courthouse Courtroom**

**100 East Screven Street**

**Quitman, GA**

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**TOWN HALL MEETING – SOLAR - 6:00pm**

- 1. PRAYER & PLEDGE**
- 2. CALL TO ORDER**
- 3. CHAIRMAN’S OPENING REMARKS**
- 4. OPEN FLOOR FOR PUBLIC COMMENTS – 5 MINUTES**
- 5. COMMISSIONERS’ RESPONSE**
  - A. Lee Larko (District 1)
  - B. Patrick Folsom (District 2)
  - C. Willie Cody (District 3)
  - D. Myra Exum (District 4)
  - E. James Maxwell (District 5)
- 6. CLOSING REMARKS**
- 7. ADJOURNMENT**

The Brooks County Board of Commissioners met for a Solar Town Hall Meeting on Thursday, September 12, 2024, at 6:00 p.m., in the Courtroom at the Brooks County Courthouse, located at 100 East Screven Street, Quitman, GA. Commissioners present were: Mr. Patrick Folsom, Chairman, Mr. James Maxwell, Vice Chairman; Ms. Myra Exum; Mr. Willie Cody; and Mr. Lee Larko. Others present were Mrs. Jessica McKinney, County Administrator; Ms. Patricia Williams, County Clerk; Mr. James Burchett, County Attorney; Mr. Jason Kemp, County Attorney; and various residents.

### **SOLAR TOWN HALL MEETING – SIGN-IN SHEET PROVIDED**

**1. CALL TO ORDER** – Chairman called to order at 6:02pm.

**2. PRAYER & PLEDGE** - Mr. Jason Kemp led all in attendance in prayer and pledge of allegiance.

**3. CHAIRMAN'S OPENING REMARKS** – Chairman Folsom opened the meeting stating that we are here for the future of Solar for Brooks County, to hear comments, issues, concerns, and of changes from the citizens that will work for Brooks County.

Chairman informed attendees to sign the sign-in sheet if they wanted to speak, each speaker will be allowed five minutes. County Attorney stated that the room is at capacity level and asked speakers to consider leaving after they have spoken so someone else can get a chance to speak (attendees outside of the door). Everyone will be allowed five minutes; and need to ask the Chairman for extra time. If you do not sign in, you do not speak, just state whether you are for or against. Changes to a future ordinance will be considered by the Board.

1. Linda Folsom – Against solar panels, do not like them, they do not serve any good purpose.

2. Danny Sapp – Stated he enjoys the quietness, has environmental concerns, the panels take away from the land, has no benefit for Brooks County, and he does not want them.

3. Cynthia Hulett – Stated she is against solar.

4. Bruce LaBone – Stated he is against solar.

5. Kathy LaBone – She is against solar.

6. Charles Bacsko – Against solar.

7. Peg Howard – Against solar. Provided copies for the Board. Provided information on the timeline of Solar in Brooks County. Mrs. Howard mentioned the Jackson Road Solar project, the tax abatement given by Tax Assessors, and that the Development Authority

Chairman moved to Florida; and failed to uphold what was upheld. She commented on the second solar project abatement of 2018, and the Development Authority provided a letter stating they were all in. She had a copy of the 35 pages of the Special Exception application. She commented on the case filed against NextEra regarding the noise and nuisance not being resolved in over a year; and still awaiting on successful litigation. She stated she has vascular problems because of the noise.

8. Julie Swann – Against. She stated there is an emotional attachment, there are contaminants that can affect our children. She further stated this is our land, it is all we have; and how many jobs does solar bring in? She questioned who does the cleanup, and what will Brooks County look like after 10-15 years if they overtake farmland.

9. Kyle Swann – Mr. Swann stated the Board has a very important decision to make. The Board should adopt regulations that serve a greater good; and need to consider when solar comes; it does not benefit Brooks County. He asked who will the Jackson Road project benefit locally? There will be less farming, less diesel used, and everyone will be touched negatively. Solar companies are motivated by money and profit, they do not care, the Board has the ability to stop them.

10. Stephanie Williams – Stated she is not for or against; urged the Board to take consideration of the health and safety of the community. She stated she emailed concerns to the Attorneys for the Development Authority and for Brooks County.

11. John Greene – he hates to see the change on Coffee Road, all you see are solar panels; and the money put into it should take care of Brooks County as you should.

12. Dana & Kathy Peters – Against.

13. Gwyn Boutwell – The new solar project is directly in line across from her home; and has concerns about the affect on parts of the body, and the runoff problems. Property value will decrease, it's a health hazard, and who will do the cleanup when the panels are no longer in used.

14. Gregg Squires – Stated he hopes the Board makes it impossible for solar. Removing the panels will cost more than cost of the land, cost approximately \$800 million to clean up and then converted. It contains silver, lead arsenic, toxic, and hazardous waste. He is against solar; and advised the Board to put together an ordinance too long that they will not be here again.

15. Charles Sapp – Against.

16. Jarrod Faucette - Against.

17. James Exum – Stated he is tired of the lies being told about his family; and not putting up with it anymore. Property owners should be able to use their property to the

best of their ability. The State recognizes panels as being productive, contributing to electricity. He advised that you should look up to learn more about the advantages and disadvantages of solar panels. The ordinance should consider the lease amount of people affected by it and be fair and equitable to withstand a legal challenge. Asked the Board to look at and come up with a solution.

18. Ada Dodd – Against.

19. Duster Spencer - Against.

20. Don Spencer – Against, needs a stronger ordinance. He believes in property rights, there is no hard yes or no, it needs to be beneficial to Brooks County, and not receive a tax break. Should benefit everyone.

21. Gerry Folsom – She has questions; is against it; and it affects the environment.

22. David & Dawanna Nonnally – Against, property owners have rights for their own property and not others. It ends the use of land, equipment, unexplained what happens to property and what it will look like.

23. Dale & Joyce Hughes – Against.

24. Justin & Jessica Goodman – Spoke on behalf of Chris Exum, thanked for the opportunity. Stated it is the right of the landowners for solar farms and is here to defend those rights. Solar offers an opportunity to use land, it is an alternative income, diversify finance, right to sustain livelihood, and stewardship if the land. It can co-exist with other land uses, generate large tax revenue and economic benefits. The landowners should make decision about partnership with solar it is crucial part to landowners. Make it expensive for solar companies, expand buffers. People are in a crisis economically.

25. Wyatt Haney – Against.

26. Andrew Sykes – Stated we should do unto others as you want others to do unto you, we have forgotten how to treat neighbors. Stated not for or against. He understands the property owners. Panels changes the landscape; he understands both sides.

27. Beverly Sykes – Not for or against.

28. June Furney – Against.

29. Phil Furney - Against.

30. Mary Billingsley – Totally, complete against. She apologized, no offense to the family. They should have no right to encroach and should not be able to do so. Asked the Board to vote no, really consider; and think about the future.

31. Linda Troutman – there are many unknown factors about solar. It is an impact on farmers and productive farmland; and have concerns about foreigners.

32. Karen Spell – Against.

33. Linda Mitchell – Against.

34. Donna Rodgers – Against.

35. Linda Booth – Against.

36. Larry Lodge – Against.

37. Russell McBride – Thanked for opportunity to speak; he is against; affects large scale of farms and hurts the land. It is about money. The decision is how it affects and impact the life of others.

38. W. Michael Burnham, II – Solar disturbs wildlife, should not tell property owners what to do with their property. The foreigners are not our neighbors.

39. David Tison – Has questions, is against it, need to educate about solar; and do not tell property owners what to do with their land.

40. Antonio Campbell – Energy Expert with Georgia Power, stated as changes are considered listen/learn and research. There are other alternatives for energy use, consider ordinance that protect solar; set up meetings to answer questions.

The Board took a break at 8:02 pm and returned to meeting at 8:16 pm.

41. Bruce Echols – Against. Things that are not talked about; issues with solar panels energy, he is worried about kadium. Nuclear power is safer source of energy; solar cannot be recycled. What is the long-term affect? It is not wrong to say no.

42. Terry Echols – against.

43. Dawn Bruce – Against. Solar creates lead in water and hard to get out. Where is energy going? It is not good for the environment.

44. Charlie Dukes – Has questions; is against. Should have learned from the first solar project how to do better next time.

45. Kathy Bentley – Against.

46. Ulysses Marable, Jr. – There is no sufficient research on cost, cleanup, contamination; and he is against it. Consider all that has been said, opinions given, vote in the way of your constituents.

47. Shane Wellendorf – Had no position on pro or con. Utility sales are a challenge, affects neighbors, EPD is trying to address erosion, and the runoff. In the ordinance identify the area you do not want solar, avoid wetlands, prioritize where you want to see it or not; and set a high bar for the applicants.

48. Megan McLeod – Against, has concerns of harmful chemicals, health of self and children.

49. Julie Murphy – Knows the perils of agriculture life and farmers; and appreciate the Board having this forum. She is against.

50. Denise Dean – Against.

51. K. Dean - Against.

52. Glenn Gardner - Against.

53. Angela Bryant - Against.

54. Melvin Morrison – Agrees to certain extent on panels. Would not want large acreage in front of someone's property. Has seen smaller acreage of panels, start small and put them out of view.

55. James Bradford – He understand the landowners rights; you see the representation tonight. Ask yourself why were you elected? Represent the people, do your job. He is against.

56. Jason Bradford – Against.

57. Edwin Pope – Property rights are restricted, affects farming; put an ordinance in place.

58. Chris Fornot – solar physically takes a lot of land; 1% power is all GA needs for 300,000 and 3,000-10,000 for solar.

James Horton – Solar is not the best long-time solution; respect the people's rights; farmers need land, farming is vulnerable, protect the land, no one else will.

59. Gordon Promish – On behalf of Dr. Harden. There is a problem. Crops cannot be rotated once solar is there; it is environmentally friendly, less energy is produced than

money to build them. There is no real cleanup plan, land turns to a graveyard. If you want energy, go nuclear.

60. Greg Hagar – Opposed to solar project; need an environment study, it does not meet the demands needed. Asked the Board to think about how the area is affected and the community; be careful in decision.

61. John Quarterman – He has 15 KW of solar on his property, it keeps the lights on and refrigerator; no problem with solar. It should not be on wetland; Solar II is a problem. The ordinance utility skills need to be beefed up.

62. Johnny Whiddon – Concerned with groundwater; is against. Driving by all you see is heavy metal; will always fight solar.

63. Cynthia Dooley – Against.

64. Paul Welch – Against.

65. Amy Holley – Against.

65. Madison Holley – Against.

66. Ashley Yocom – Against.

67. JR Yocom – Against.

68. Tom Wheeler – He is concerned with Fire, and Ambulance services coming down Jackson Road; runoff concerns are detrimental and an impact on the community.

69. Wanda Koehmstedt – Moved from the city to the county; supports the county with a business, but not solar. Need to protect future land for the children, solar is not the best for Brooks County, does not bring money to the county.

70. Oglesby Jackson, Sr. – Thanked all of Brooks County. Read Matthew 22:35. To the elected officials, do everything to help your neighbor.

71. Marsey Wilson – Against. Have not been around long enough to know safety, or what will happen. Who will fix the damage?

72. Abby Sowell – Property rights are lost; this is serious take heed and vote solar out.

73. Gary Christian – Against.

Chairman thanked everyone for the turn out, the Board will be looking at the ordinance; stay tuned for a planned meeting.

The town hall meeting closed at 10:20 pm.

Mr. Patrick Folsom, Chairman

Ms. Patricia A. Williams, Clerk