

# MEETING MINUTES

IN

## BROOKS COUNTY SOLAR ORDINANCE COMMITTEE

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Date: February 7, 2025  
Time: 3:00 PM  
Meeting called to order by: Lee Larko

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### ATTENDANCE

Lee Larko, Larry Cunningham, Linda Troutman, Justin Goodman, Zurich DeShazior, Kyle Swann, and Peg Howard.

Guests SGRC: James Horton, Alexandra Arazayus

Absent: Patrick Folsom, Stuart Chappell,

### APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Prior Minutes from January meeting approved. Motion and seconded, unanimously approved.

### DISCUSSION.

Meeting regularity was discussed and is being considered for twice a month as we continue to drill down to the details. It is agreed there should be an evening meeting at the courthouse so the community can be made aware of the activity and forward movement of the committee. Public Comments are to be accepted and encouraged.

Cunningham clearly identified our mission from the culmination of open discussion and agreement of the committee at the previous meetings. Discussion followed with the outcome listed below.

We should be diligent in wording and enforceability of next ordinance

The primary benchmarks the ordinance should address are as follows:

1. No tax abatement.
2. Quality of land /Quantity of Land - Solar Facility defined limit-Prime Ag or defined limit of total acres in county
3. Solar Facilities will NOT be seen from any road or adjoining properties
4. Solar related Equipment Sound/noise will NOT be heard from adjoining properties.
5. No Lithium Battery Storage Systems- hazard and noise concerns
6. End Of Life for Solar Facility should not financially burden Brooks County

Secondary Bench Marks for further definition and discussion are as follows:

1A. Lease Options filed

2A. Fees for application- to planning and zoning

3A. Land Disturbance- Storm Water Runoff- EPD- Fees for Issuing Authority

4A. Locations permitted- proximity to transmission line/easement (Scope/Scale will affect)

5A. Soil /Water Samples

6A. Maintenance Logs- to define value of newly installed replacements and compliance.

7A. Escrow account to cover cost associated with enforcing ordinance

This document will correlate the numbers with the categories of this meeting discussion.

James Horton and Alexandra Arazayus from SGRC came to discuss the different aspects and ways solar/should/ can be defined in our community. James explained the importance of a solar ordinance being a legal document that is enforceable and a supporting document to our zoning ordinance. A solar ordinance defines in detail what can go on the land and must currently be applied for under a special exception. A zoning ordinance defines the uses of the land- and is relative to the character map of the county It was decided SGRC would return with some useful documents the committee should use to make the decisions for recommendation to the commissioner. Consideration should be made to comply with the vision inside the 5-year comprehensive plan- the blue print of the future and measurement of the present and the past.

It was discussed to limit the size descriptions from the current solar ordinance and define as ground mounted solar.

Other consideration with zoning: Will we allow a variance and how that needs to be addressed within an ordinance.

Concerns for limiting the “phases” concept of expansion developers often use in this industry and how that could be limited within the benchmarks.

Justin provided us with a sample document of a parcel with varying setback limits so that we could better visualize the space and amount of foot print this would have on developing properties. He will look into doing the same concept for the existing facilities in our county.

### **Benchmarks and Current Standings**

**1.Tax Abatements-** the committee remains steadfast to not allowing an abatement.

**2. Size and Scale-** this subject shall include the quality and quantity of the land. We continue to discuss if we would like to enforce a limit per project or if it is best to limit the total amount of solar allowed in the county. We are discussing the limit of proximity by miles for any project to any other project.

**3.Setbacks/Visual buffers-** Setback will be measured from property lines and right of ways. Visual buffers will be in addition to setback and will be planted and maintained to obscure the visibility of the facility. Adjoining properties, motorist will not see the ground mounted facility. Details will be required to make this benchmark measurable at all phases of development.

**4. Noise barriers/ Inverter and transformer placement-** It is agreed that all transformer and inverters units will have a central location in the center of the facility and will further be surrounded by noise mitigating barriers. There will not be any allowances for this equipment to be separated from the compound it is being required to be located in.

**5. Battery Energy Storage Systems.** The committee continues to be concerned for the safety of the citizens and the hazards associated with fires on these systems. The committee has requested a moratorium on these storage systems to be presented to the commissioners for the March meeting.

**6. Decommissioning-** it remains the goal of the committee for the county to not be burdened by the end of life of a solar facility- further discussion will take place in the future to define this.

**1A. Lease Option Filed** – it was discussed these should be filed timely at the courthouse with a penalty of non- filing.

**2A. Fees- continue** to agree fees should be increased to allow a better capture of the time and efforts it take to enforce and maintain future enforcement from application to possible annual fees.

The county needs to benefit at some level from these fees and the work entailed in the processes stated James Horton from SGRC

**3A. Land Disturbance-** We need to continue to explore becoming the issuing authority in the future because it is related to forty dollar per acre fees that county is not getting from the fees collected by EPD. This area needs to address stormwater runoff also and the process to identify it and enforce it during construction and after.

**4A. Locations permitted-** we will further discuss in the zoning aspect we are exploring.

**5A. Water / Land Samples-**This continues to be a concern as we move in to the future.

**6A. Maintenance logs-** continues to be a tool to define non- compliance and to capture addition of new equipment.

**7A. Escrow Account-** Further agreement this would be beneficial to add to the ordinance.

\*\*\*Note: Resource Information was provided for review/ study by committee and is used as a tool for reference for considerations and concerns.

Sample current updated Solar Ordinances from Thomas County and Lee County.

Current Brooks County Solar Ordinance. Georgia Recommended Siting for Solar

## **MOTIONS**

No formal motions were presented at this meeting.

## **NEXT MEETING**

Next Meeting was scheduled for March 6, 2025, 3:00 Pm

Motion to Adjourn / Seconded

Respectfully submitted,

