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**HOWARD COUNTY AGRICULTURAL PRESERVATION BOARD (APB)  
AND STATE AGRICULTURAL PRESERVATION ADVISORY BOARD (APAB)**

**September 21, 2020**

**Attendance:**

Board Members: Mickey Day (Chair)  
Savannah Kaiss  
Cathy Hudson  
Ann Jones (Vice Chair)  
Jamie Brown

Staff: James Zoller, Executive Secretary/Agricultural Coordinator (OCS)  
Morenike Oyenusi, Senior Assistant County Solicitor  
Joy Levy, Program Administrator, (ALPP)  
Beth Burgess, Chief, Resource Conservation Division  
Matthew Hoover, Administrative Aide, (OCS)  
Mary Kendall, Deputy Director, (DPZ)

Guest: Edward Lewis  
John Forgash  
John Hobbs  
Frances Yuhas  
Theodore Mariani  
Leah Miller  
Kathy Johnson  
Rob Vogel  
Joan Lewis Kennedy

**Action Items**

**1) Approval of minutes from the meeting on August 24, 2020**

Deleted Ms. Kaiss and Ms. Oyenusi from the attended list. No other changes or corrections. Ms. Jones motioned to approve, and Ms. Hudson seconded the motion. All members in attendance approved the Meeting Minutes from 8/24/20.

**2) Request for Advisory Comments, Commercial Solar Facility (CSF), E. Alexander & Betty S. Adams property, HO-91-04- E, 113 +/- acres (APB) [Adam's Staff Report](#)**

Ms. Levy reviewed the staff report with the board and the contents that were included with the report. The request was brought to the board to provide advisory comments on a proposed commercial solar facility (CSF). Ms. Levy reviewed the current APB CSF policy with the board and the Howard County Council Bill 59-2016.

The staff analysis it that the applicant provided documentation that their proposal meets the APB CSF Policy. In addition, farmer Rick Warfield, whose family's trust owns the land, is going to keep the farming operation that is currently being run, except for the 10-acre CSF. The applicant plans on incorporating a pollinator habitat into the CSF design.

The Board discussion was based on the size of the project, the location of the project on the parcel, and the buffer around the project. It was also discussed if it was an ancillary business.

Ms. Jones stated one advisory comment is that the required landscape buffer be minimized to the greatest extent possible and certainly in the area that is surrounded by the other farm fields. All Board members in attendance agreed with this. No other advisory comments were made. The Board members in attendance agreed that it meets their policy and with Ms. Jones's advisory comment.

**3) Request for Preliminary Review, Commercial Solar Facility, John & Jamie Hobbs property, HO-89-01-E(S1), 51 +/- acres (APB) [Hobb's Community Solar project overview](#)**

It was advised that because it is a preliminary review there is no Staff Report. The preliminary review was one of the [recommendations](#) given by the Solar Task Force. Mr. Hobbs, Ms. Yuhas and Mr. Vogel are representing the property and presenting it to the APB, so they can receive feedback for the project.

Ms. Yuhas of Turning Point Energy gave the presentation. Ms. Yuhas met with the Board back in November to present the project. After the Solar Task Force (STF) recommendations were made they decided to approach the Board again. The goal of the presentation is to see if the APB would support the project and if they do they will move forward with a Conditional Use Plan.

Two configurations were presented to the board. One was an L shape layout that used slightly less acreage and the other was their preferred more rectangular design that is more proficient and uses an additional 1.2 acres. They took the recommendations of the STF and incorporated them into their designs.

## **Discussion Items**

**1) Continue Discussion on Solar Task Force Recommendations ([Link](#)) and the ALPB Solar Policy ([Link](#))**

The current ALPB Solar policy and the Solar Task Force Recommendations were pulled up during the discussion. It was advised that the County Executive Office is currently reviewing the STF recommendations and will have a formal outline of their thoughts soon.

The primary discussion revolved around how much acreage should be allowed in the policy for the CSFs. The current policy is the area must be the lesser of 10% of the property's size or 10 acres. In the STF recommendations it was stated that it takes 5 to 10 acres per megawatt for ground-mount commercial solar facilities.

The board also discussed if they should or should not count non-farmable land when determining the percentage of allowable acreage. It was also discussed what should be included in the CSF acreage such as an access road within the 50-foot buffer and one that is outside the buffer. They also discussed waiting for a response from the administration before making any changes to the policy.

The Board members in attendance agreed with the STF recommendations of two megawatts or less, that some type of agricultural use such as a pollinator habitat be included in the CSF and for a preliminary hearing with the APB of the CSF plan. The Board is still struggling with the allowable acreage and that the primary purpose for the business is an ancillary use to the farm. The Board decided they would draft a letter to send to the County Council with their concerns.

## **2) Program Update**

There are applicants that are in the process of being scored for the Agricultural Land Preservation Program (ALPP).

Letters are being prepared for residents that are uncommitted in the RR and RC to let them know about the ALPP.

Some of the IPAs that matured in August are still being worked on.

Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) funds are going to be used for a deer harvesting pilot program called HoCo Harvest for the Hunger. The goal is to promote deer harvesting in Howard County to help control the deer population. ([Link](#))

## **Public Testimony**

Mr. Forgash, from SolHarvest Energy, stated that 10 acres max or less is going to be a stretch for solar companies to produce an efficient CSF. For an efficiency and design standpoint they would require more land due to the tracker technology, which is the preferred technology.

Mr. Mariani, a Howard County resident, believes that the lesser of 10% or 10 acres is adequate for the APB Solar Policy. He also stated a project does not have to be two megawatts to be viable. He advised the Board that a solar company approached him and said they could do a CSF using six acres and make it viable. He also doesn't think exceptions should be made for special cases.

Mr. Brown motioned to adjourn, and it was seconded by Ms. Hudson. All members in attendance were in favor of adjourning the meeting.

Meeting adjourned at 9:27PM