

Planning Commission Minutes of the Proceedings - Final

Historic Courthouse
310 W 19th Street
Cheyenne, WY 82001

Laramie County Planning Commission
Prepared by the Laramie County Planning & Development Office
Laramie County, Wyoming

Thursday, March 28, 2024

3:30 PM

Commissioners Board Room

Call To Order

Chairman Caughey called the meeting to order at 3:30 p.m. with all members present. Guests were welcomed to the meeting and the assembly joined in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Roll Call

Present

Jason Caughey, Jack Stadel, John Watkins,
Natacha Gaspar, Mark Smith

Approval of Minutes

1. Consideration of Minutes of Proceedings for March 14, 2024.

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Attachments: [PC 3.14.24 Draft](#)

A motion was made by Member Stadel, seconded by Member Gaspar to approve the Minutes of the Proceedings for March 14, 2024. Vote 5-0.

Aye: Caughey, Stadel, Watkins, Gaspar, Smith

Land Use: Variances/Board App./Plats

2. PUBLIC HEARING regarding a Solar Energy Site Plan and Solar Energy Permit for the Cowboy Solar I & II Project, Situated in Sections 30, 29, 28, 27, 26, and 35 of Township 13 North, Range 65 West, as well as Sections 26 and 25, Township 13 North, Range 66 West, and Section 2 of Township 12 North, Range 65 West of the 6th P.M., Laramie County, WY.

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Attachments: [PZ-24-00015 LCPC PLACEHOLDER STAFF REPORT PKG 3.25.24-compressed](#)
[PZ-24-00015 Public Comment-A.M. Torriani 3.28.24](#)
[PZ-24-00015 BOCC STAFF REPORT POSTPONE 4.2.24](#)
[PZ-24-00015 LCPC STAFF REPORT POSTPONEMENT 3.28.24](#)

Justin Arnold, Planning Manager, said that the Cowboy Solar I & II Project was

postponed from the March 14, 2024 Planning Commission meeting to allow for the first agency reviews to be completed. A DEQ Industrial Siting Council hearing has been held and the Cowboy Solar Project was approved with conditions. Enbridge, Inc. is the applicant that wishes to construct the 3845-acre solar energy system situated on 5480 acres of leased land north of Chalk Bluff Road. The project lies in the A-2 and LU zone districts.

Concerns from Planning staff include:

1. Another access point for emergency response has not been determined yet.
2. Chalk Bluff Road will be impacted with increased traffic and heavy loads of construction material. This is a 75 year old road that has substantial damage from oil and gas traffic to well pads.
3. Ongoing discussion for a road plan and hazard mitigation plan is being held with the appropriate departments. At this time \$674,000 has been committed by Cowboy Solar to the fire district for a truck purchase and training.
4. If there is damage to the solar farm is there a potential for contamination to the ground.

Christian Dick, project representative was available for questions and responded to concerns raised.

1. The project has an estimated 25 year life span but can be refitted after that time if it continues.
2. All parts of the system are recyclable and none of this project will end up in Laramie County landfills.
3. Enbridge is a Canadian company and will own and operate this project.
4. The largest increase in traffic would be during the construction period with 90% being regular car and pickup traffic.
5. The project has a decommissioning plan and is bonded for reclamation.
6. The project plan includes a detailed vegetation plan for weed and dust control.
7. Work is continuing on the road agreement with Public Works and a hazard mitigation plan with the Fire District that will address the additional emergency response access and cistern placement.
8. Benefits to the County include employment opportunities during construction, sales and use tax, and significant property tax revenue.
9. The project would not be built if they have no contracts for purchasing of the power, but this type of project is supported by Economic Development organizations for business recruitment since companies looking to relocate to Laramie County desire clean energy. He does not anticipate a problem with entering into a contract for selling the power produced.
10. Fire danger is decreased since the vegetation on the leased land will be kept to 2" height. This will also help with erosion and dust control.
11. The battery cube life is similar to the life of the contract and equipment will not require replacement so heavy loads on the road would only occur during the construction phase.

Molly Bennett, Public Works Director, said that the Chalk Bluff Road was included in a

recent pavement review report and is in poor condition having received a 42.6 rating out of 100. The condition of the road will require a complete rebuild since there is little structure left. Her agency is in discussions with Cowboy Solar to enter a road maintenance agreement.

Chairman Caughey opened the Public Hearing. Comments in opposition were heard from:

1. Ed Prosser - 1200 Chalk Bluffs Road - Adjacent landowner that is concerned with the road damage, fire plan needs to include second access, dust and noxious weeds control.
2. William Obermeier - 4849 Road 203 - Concerns were increased traffic and impact on road condition.
3. Marc Torriani - 105 Road 161 - Questions on the battery storage system and their high fire risk, management and ownership of project, potential increase in insurance rates to area homeowners, property valuation impacts, higher utility rates, increase in cost of housing, hail damage, and does not want more renewable energy projects in Laramie County.
4. Jeff Barnes -2378 Fishing Bridge - Asked if this project will receive Federal funds, where are materials produced, who is the end user, workforce will create housing shortage.
5. Ann Lucas - 944 Morgan Ranch Rd - Her home is ten miles from project but has concerns in the risk of fire danger, increased homeowners insurance, property values decreased, jobs won't be attractive, and this project would be better suited elsewhere.
6. Don Odom - 5419 Imperial Court - He is a truck driver and knows the damage to the road and dust this project will create, and community will not benefit from this project.
7. Aeron Nab - 2800 US Hwy 30 - A similar project in Nebraska sustained substantial hail damage, company's financial documents, who is end user, and fire aspect of battery storage.
8. Suzie Osterloh - 620 Spring Beauty Trail - Concerns included wildlife migration paths, fire risk, out of country company, long term management, and nothing is recyclable.
9. Chris Self - 621 Spring Beauty Trail - Fire dangers and increased insurance premiums were his concerns.
10. Diana Randall - 1503 W. Gopp - recycling is not ready to handle this type of waste.
11. Jacob Wasserburger - 420 W. 23rd Street - The United States will experience energy poverty like European Countries are experiencing and elected officials should not approve renewable energy projects.

There being no further public comments Chairman Caughey closed the public hearing and called for a motion and discussion. Questions from the Commission included fire risk, hail damage, road traffic, where is power going, insurance factor. Justin Arnold and Christian Dick answered the questions posed.

A motion was made by Member Stadel, seconded by Member Watkins, to adopt the findings of facts a, b, and c of the staff report and postpone consideration of this project until such time that the four conditions outlined in the staff report are completed and to also include two additional conditions that the Road and Fire Plans fit the needs of Laramie County. The motion carried by the following vote: 5-0

Aye: Caughey, Stadel, Watkins, Gaspar, Smith

Adjournment

There being no further business Chairman Caughey adjourned the meeting at 5:03 p.m.

CERTIFICATION

True and correct copy of the Minutes of the Proceedings for Thursday, March 28, 2024.

Approved by the Laramie County Planning Commission on Thursday, April 11, 2024.