

Packet Addition

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November 12, 2020

To: Randy Mielnik Township Planner
Donna Hornberger, Chair Planning Commission

From: Joanne M. Westphal

Re: Request to Amend Ordinance #199 (Solar Arrays)

I am writing to you once again to request that the Peninsula Planning Commission revisit Ordinance #199 and consider an amendment to that ordinance that addresses **in-ground solar panel arrays on operating farms**. Current ordinance language, which limits these types of solar arrays to 10 KWH on agriculturally zoned land, fails to reflect the energy needs of operating farms. In the case of Cherry Connection, Consumers Energy (our service provider) has determined that to achieve zero net metering (the most cost effective solar energy system) on our farm, a solar array of 31.177 KWH would be needed. That size system would cover less than 1/3 of an acre and would provide enough energy to cover the current energy demands on our 81-acre farm. To set an arbitrary ceiling of 10 KWH for in-ground solar panel arrays on agriculturally zoned properties, forces farmers to continue to depend on fossil fuel sources when clean, renewable energy is readily available to them. This does not make sense for several reasons:

1. Such a restriction flies in the face of state and federal efforts to curbe global warming, which in the final analysis will come down to local, individual consumer decisions to invest in clean, renewable energy.

2. An amendment to Ordinance #199 which could read: "In-ground solar systems are permitted on agriculturally zoned land using 'zero-net metering' as determined by the energy provider (e.g., Consumers Energy, DTE, etc.) for the property." By using the standard of "zero net metering" for an in-ground solar array, it removes any "arbitrary" KWH limit placed on a property, and thereby, places the burden of determining the amount of solar energy needed by a farm or business squarely on the shoulders of an independent energy service provider, like Consumers Energy or DTE.

3. Black outs, brown outs, and other forms of energy disruption are likely to occur as global warming and stresses on the current grid continue to escalate. Typical Generac back-up generator system, that most residential structures currently have, already produces 30+ KWH. It seems nonsensical to place a ceiling of 10 KWH on farm operations, with substantially more acreage, and energy demands for refrigeration, dehydration, pumping, and processing.

4. Placement of solar arrays, with appropriate screening and landscaping, can support pollinator species under them, while creating very little visual intrusion on the landscape. Many case studies exist to illustrate this downstate and throughout the country on farms, parks, **and** nature preserves.

I encourage the Planning Commission to take up this request at Monday's meeting and subsequent meetings until a reasonable response is forthcoming on this issue. **Please include this letter in the Planning Commission Packet for Monday, November 16, 2020. Thank you and best wishes.**

cc: Don Passenger, Attorney
Rob Manigold, Township Supervisor
Christina Deeren, Township Zoning Administrator