

Commissioner William F. Hutson called the public hearing to order at 6:00 p.m. with Commissioner Stephen D. Hambley and Commissioner Colleen M. Swedyk present. The meeting was held in the commissioners’ hearing room.

The following people were in attendance:

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| David Hull | Jerry Winkler, Guilford Township |
| Paul Jeffers, Montville Township | Denise Gumbita, Chatham Township |
| Marty Warchola, Lafayette Township | Sally Albrecht, Montville Township |
| Barry Frey | Jim Burns, Hinckley Township |
| Robert Patrick, Wadsworth City | Eric Noderer, Litchfield Township |

Mr. Hutson stated that the purpose of the public hearing is to discuss Senate Bill 52 involving Wind and Solar Electric Generation Siting Authority and our process of implementing it for Medina County; this is the second of two hearings. The commissioners will consider this formally at the January 4 commissioners’ meeting.

Mr. Hambley stated at last week’s hearing, there was an individual in attendance discussing legislative intent. At last week’s CCAO Conference, there were several presentations on SB 52. He had specifically asked the bill sponsors of the legislative intent noting that they were aware of what we are trying to do and this meets with their intent of county commissioners declaring the entire unincorporated area of the county as being an exclusionary zone for wind and solar utility scale developments. There were a number of representatives of the solar and wind projects, and they are busy in other parts of the state and they would prefer counties don’t do this. There are some other counties considering a very similar approach to ours. Some of the commissioners stated that if they have a township that would like to maintain the ability to do this, they would give that a lot of weight and consideration. Senator McColley had stated that these kind of projects are transformative to a community, and his belief is that the county ought to be involved in making the decisions.

Public Comments

Jerry Winkler, Guilford Township, stated that he is looking for understanding of this because in reading the proposal, it takes all the say away from the township and puts it in the hands of the commissioners. He asked what say does the township have in this process. Mr. Hutson stated that according to the law that was passed – none; it rests with the county commissioners who are supposed to make the decision. He noted that if they had a proposal that came to the board, they would go to Guilford Township and ask for input. Mr. Winkler stated that from his perspective, the individual townships should be involved in those discussions.

Mr. Hambley explained that when looking at the structure of it, the township is involved with it even if exclusionary zones are not created because if they go to the Ohio Power Siting Board, a trustee as well as a commissioner sits on that and votes on it. Prior to this, they had projects coming through where the local communities were 100% opposed to some of these projects and it didn’t matter because the decision was made in Columbus, so that was part of the compromise. He stated that he agreed with Mr. Winkler noting that it’s important to have these public discussions.

Jim Burns, Hinckley Township, stated that his opinion is similar to housing developments where Medina County Planning Commission makes recommendations to the township, and the township can accept or reject those recommendations. He hopes that we move somewhere similar to that with this legislation giving the townships ultimate authority to do as the people choose to do. He understands that these projects can be very large in acreage and can impact a neighboring community. He asked the commissioners to keep in mind that the ultimate power should reign with the people who live near those facilities. Eventually, we will need sources of power that are outside of gas and coal whether we like it or not.

Mr. Hutson noted that the commissioners didn’t write the law, and the Township Association from a state level may want to contact their legislatures and see if they can get it changed, but the way it is currently drafted, it rests with the county commissioners. He mentioned the Power Siting Board that is also involved does have representation from townships. The commissioners’ proposal is to basically exclude all of the unincorporated areas of the county. He stated that there was an individual at the previous hearing that wanted it to be more selective or open, and from an economic development standpoint, the companies that tend to do this kind of development are probably not going to be too concerned about zoning and local laws. Even if Medina County is declared 100% off limits, if they a site in Medina County, they will still come here, go through the process and apply. At that point in time, the townships would be heavily involved in making recommendations and providing feedback in terms of the commissioners’ decision-making.

Mr. Hambley explained that we are talking about utility scale which is 50 MW. There are smaller ones in the county (Wadsworth) and this doesn’t affect them. Rather, it is typically 1,000 acres or so. These huge scale projects must have the electrical infrastructure in place to do this, so there is only certain areas of our county that this could actually happen. Lorain-Medina Rural Electric has not been contacted regarding any of these projects, so at this point, they are already excluded from any possibility of this. By the time they go through the process of studies, a couple hundred thousand dollars would be expended before they even start talking to a property owner. Should they approach us, they would be working through our Planning Commission which involves people from the townships

and would work with the normal process that we do at the county level. He noted that conditions can be set such as Road Use Maintenance Agreements, landscaping, storm water and others, but you're doing that up front rather than after they have already expended nearly a million dollars to build a project. The only leverage you really have in that is actually the Ohio Power Siting Board to set those conditions. This provides the opportunity to set that early in which case we could have the input and we are closer to our public than our state board. It's not perfect because it was a compromise.

There was discussion regarding two solar fields in Wadsworth with Robert Patrick noting that one is 6 MW and the other is 3 MW. Both were put into operation in 2020. Mr. Hutson noted that this legislation does not apply to municipalities.

David Hull inquired of statistics of how many of these are in Ohio. Mr. Hambley stated he believes there are 20 or so in Ohio that were either recently completed or are not subject to SB 52. Many of them also have a tax abatement which commissioners would have the ability to provide because they have a higher value, and there is a cap as to how much they pay. It's up to each county and what the proposals are. This is really about the locals having more influence than they had before this bill which was the legislative intent. He stated that the industry would rather it be kept with the Ohio Power Siting Board exclusively. Robert Patrick inquired why no other type of generating facility was considered. Mr. Hambley answered that according to Senator McColley, it was because they had so many projects that literally transformed those areas, and the other types of generating facilities haven't been as impactful as these have been.

There was discussion regarding Mr. Burns' desire for Hinckley to be included in the exclusionary zone. Mr. Hambley noted that this is probably a moot point because he doesn't think that area has the ability for a large scale project. Mr. Burns agreed that he doesn't believe there is enough large sections of land in Hinckley Township for a large scale project like this. Mr. Hambley added that Lorain-Medina Rural Electric has no problem with this and have not been approached by any developers at this point. If a project comes up, conditions could be set being mindful of what the property owners and township wants to add.

Paul Jeffers, Montville Township, stated that even if they are included in the exclusion for the unincorporated areas, years from now, if someone wants to come in and set up wind or solar, they come before the commissioners and the commissioners would still have the option to invite the trustees and could still possibly accept something like that if it's accepted by the township and the commissioners and it doesn't mean they are excluded for life; Mr. Hambley confirmed. Mrs. Swedyk added that it gives more control for conditions. Mr. Hambley explained that the commissioners, with this authority, would be able to start setting up that procedure now by resolution. It would be a process of should a township and property owners want to be out of the exclusionary zone and be open for it, this would be the process to follow. This could be adopted by not only the commissioners, but also the Planning Commission. Mr. Jeffers stated that he appreciates being able to apply with conditions; it makes a big difference. Mr. Hambley mentioned that this may be a great time for comprehensive plans to be updated.

Mr. Winkler stated that he is grateful that they have an opportunity to be involved in this.

There were no further comments.

Adjournment

Mr. Hutson adjourned the public hearing adjourned at 6:31 p.m.

All deliberations concerning official business and formal actions by this Board of Commissioners were conducted in an open public meeting this thirteenth day of December, 2021.

Respectfully submitted,

Rhonda J. Beck
Clerk to the Commissioners

COMMISSIONERS

OF

MEDINA COUNTY

Stephen D. Hambley

Colleen M. Swedyk

William F. Hutson