

**Pierson Township Planning Commission
21156 W. Cannonsville Rd.
Pierson, MI 49339**

**Meeting Minutes
Jan. 25, 2023 at 7:00PM**

- A) Call to order: 7:00PM
- B) Pledge of allegiance
- C) Roll Call present: Lecceadone, Erickson, Dunneback, Maioho, Smith, Bergman, Tibbe.
Also present: Lance Gates and Kevin Yeomans.
- D) Minutes from the December 1, 2022 meeting were approved.
- E) Public comment: None
- F) New Business: Lance Gates informed the planning commission that property owners in the township have been approached by commercial and private entities wanting to install solar energy farms. Similar activity, as well as the construction of solar energy projects are already underway in some of the surrounding townships. In response, Pierson township has issued a 4 month moratorium on the approval and construction of any solar energy systems in order to form a committee, and to have the time necessary to create an ordinance which best determines and shapes how these systems will be regulated for all of our different zoning districts. As it currently stands, there are no restrictions for residential areas in which solar panels are used in an accessory (secondary) manner for personal use in order to power structures on the property. One of the main goals of the township Master Plan is to preserve agricultural land for as long as possible. An ordinance needs to be created in order to define the difference between principal (primary) solar energy systems which generate much higher amounts of electricity which are then exported through the grid to a utility market, verses much smaller accessory (secondary) systems which are used to power residential, agricultural , or commercial/industrial property onsite. Kevin Yeomans form Fresh Coast advised the PC that a minimum of 80 to 100 acres is usually necessary to build a principal energy system. Also in order to protect agricultural land, regulations must be put into place which guarantee that if the owners of a solar farm abandon the project in the future, sufficient funds or a bond have already been put into place before the project is started, in order to cover the costs involved in decommissioning the system and restoring the land back to its original state. Other questions to be considered are:
 - 1) Should the ordinance include roof mounted systems in addition to ground mounted panels?
 - 2) If roof mounted systems are allowed, should there be a formula limiting their surface area?
 - 3) Should primary solar systems be allowed in agricultural districts, or disallowed all together and limited to commercial/industrial districts?

- 4) Will principal and accessory systems be defined and differentiated by surface area/acreage, the amount of power produced, or whether or not they tap into the power grid?
- 5) Does southwest Michigan get enough sunshine to make solar energy systems economically viable and sustainable, and how would they benefit the township overall?
- 6) Should regulations be put into place dictating the need for ground cover or landscaping around ground mounted systems?

Jason Bergman, Patrick Maioho, and Tyler Lecceadone have agreed to form a subcommittee which will meet with Lance Gates and Kevin Yeomans to begin crafting the framework on a solar system ordinance for Pierson township. At next month's PC meeting, specific details in the ordinance will be covered, discussed, and decided upon so that a draft of the ordinance can be presented for a public hearing tentatively scheduled approximately 60 days from now. After the public hearing is closed, a vote will be taken on the completed ordinance at the next planning committee meeting.

- G) Ongoing Business: PC meetings are typically held on the fourth Thursday of the month. The dates for the remainder of this year's meetings will be: February 23, March 23, April 27, May 25, June 22, July 27, August 24, September 28, October 26, and November 30. The December meeting date is still undecided.
- H) Meeting was adjourned at 8:00 pm.