

# Minutes of the Meeting of the Avon Township Planning Commission

November 24, 2021

Avon Township Hall (16881 Queens Road, Avon)

**Call to Order:** Chair Lori Yurczyk called to order the meeting of the Avon Township Planning Commission at 7:00 PM in the Main Chamber of the Town Hall. The meeting was also available online at the following URL: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88599868967> (PIN: 494892).

**Pledge:** The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

**Roll Call:** Present – Craig Blonigen, LeRoy Gondringer, Rich Sanoski, Stephen Saupe, and Lori Yurczyk. Also present: Kelly Martini.

**Approval of Agenda:** Gondringer moved to approve the agenda as presented. Sanoski second. All in favor. Motion carried.

**Minutes:** Sanoski moved to approve the minutes from the October 27, 2021 meeting as presented. Gondringer second. All in favor. Motion carried.

**Public Hearings:** *none scheduled*

## **Business:**

- 1. Gertken/Novel Energy Solutions IUP** – Scott Tempel, representing Novel Energy Solutions and Brian & Linda Gertken, attended the meeting by Zoom to request an IUP for a 1 MW solar garden on the Gertken's property at 34206 Smiley Drive, Albany (MN) 56307. Chair Yurczyk opened the discussion asking Mr. Tempel to give the PC an introduction of the project and the Novel Company. Mr. Tempel said that:
  - access to the array would be through the Gertken property along the farm road to the north;
  - Xcel will run lines to the site;
  - they will plant a pollinator mix and provide screening;
  - construction would take from 5-6 weeks;
  - the posts will be pounded in the ground and no concrete will be used (except on corners of perimeter fence posts);
  - the fence will be grounded. They will work to ensure no stray voltage;
  - their projects are mostly residential-based;
  - If their permit is approved, subscribers will be recruited from the local area. They haven't yet begun to seek subscribers;
  - the company is involved with other sites in Stearns County;
  - Novel is on track to be the largest provider of community solar gardens in Minnesota with about 40% of the community solar business in Minnesota;
  - the PUC limits companies to one MW array per mile. Multiple arrays can be on the Gertken property because they are owned by different companies;
  - Novel has their own crews for construction;
  - Lines are run underground;
  - solar is a good neighbor. It is quiet;
  - they plan to install single-axis trackers;
  - the panel lifetime is estimated to be about 25 years;
  - 95% of the panels are recycled, especially for precious metals;
  - the cost of decommissioning is about \$125K, with shipping to facilities the primary cost;
  - there would be about 3,600 panels on the site, which will be roughly 8 acres (7.71 acres);

- the panels are nearly indestructible in hail storms, etc.; and
- they must pay an interconnection fee to Xcel by mid-December. They plan to do this even though final permits will not be in hand by that time.

After hearing Mr. Tempel’s comments and discussing them, Gondringer moved to recommend to the Supervisors to set a public hearing on December 29, 2021 at 7:10 PM to consider a request for an IUP for Brian & Linda Gertken/Novel Energy Solutions to construct a 1 MW solar garden on their property at 34206 Smiley Drive, Albany (MN). Blonigen second. All in favor Motion carried. At the hearing, the Town will want the LESA score for the property, as well as the documents required by the County for solar array permitting. The Clerk will find the files from the previous projects on the Gertken property as a reference. The road leading to the previous Gertken solar projects is not being well-maintained. Chair Lori Yurczyk indicated that the conditions placed on the previous approved projects should be looked into and enforced. This includes trees and shrubs planted for screening that have died. The Supervisors might consider a site inspection prior to the hearing, though there could be issues with weather and darkness.

2. **Parking Ordinance** – The Supervisors requested review of the proposed Parking Ordinance that would restrict parking on Township roads to 24 consecutive hours. The Town attorney suggested a few, mostly minor, changes. The PC discussed the proposed ordinances but no changes were recommended. Blonigen moved to recommend to the Supervisors adoption of the proposed Parking Ordinance, 12-01-21, whether at the next board meeting, or special Town meeting. Gondringer second. Four in favor. One abstain (Saupe). We are waiting for clarification about whether or not such an ordinance must first be approved by voters at the Annual meeting or a special Town meeting.
3. **ARPA Funding** – A new idea was to purchase COVID test kits. An estimate will be provided for touchless entry on the exit door in the Main Chamber. Keyless entry may be another potential ARPA expenditure.

**Reports/Announcements**

1. **439 Ordinance Books** – it would be helpful for PC members to have a hard copy of the 439 Ordinance. The Supervisors will be asked to consider this at their meeting. The Clerk will follow up to determine the cost.
2. **Zoom** – There is currently a problem with our Zoom login info – a passcode is required, but this should be removed. The Clerk will look into developing a new login. The new login will likely be: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/8325486945?pwd=S3pCQmROS2R5Tjh5c3FXcmpoeEtiZz09>; passcode AvonTown.

**Next Meeting:** The next PC meeting is December 29, 2021 at 7:00 PM. *Login above (Reports #2).*

**Other Meetings:** The next Supervisor’s Meeting is December 1, 2021. *See above or the Town website for Zoom login info.*

**Adjournment:** The meeting adjourned at 8:35 PM.

Respectfully submitted,  
Stephen G. Saupe, Clerk

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

**date:** November 30, 2021

**Approval:**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Lori Yurczyk, Planning Commission Chair – signature

**date:** \_\_\_\_\_