

ONEIDA CHARTER TOWNSHIP
PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING

HELD

June 5, 2018

AT 7:00 P.M.

MEMBERS PRESENT: CHAIRMAN WALTERS, MEMBERS GREEN, KILGORE, SCHERER, STAHELIN AND SCHULTZ.

MEMBERS EXCUSED: SCHROEDER.

OTHERS PRESENT: ZONING ADMINISTRATOR GOSCHKA, SUPERVISOR COOLEY, CLERK CAMPBELL, MR. DEPUTY TREASURER PALERMO, MR. ZIMMERMAN REPRESENTING SANSTONE CREEK SOLAR, LLC, WHO HAD MADE APPLICATION FOR REZONING OF THE SUBSTATION AREA, AND RESIDENTS OF THE AREA OF THE REQUESTED REZONING.

1. Meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m., by Chairman Walters.
2. Pledge of Allegiance was given.
3. There were no additions to the Agenda and it was approved.
4. Minutes of April 3, 2018 were approved as amended in a Motion made by Mr. Green and supported by Mr. Kilgore. Motion Carried.
5. Public Comment: There was none.
6. Chairman Walters opened the Public Hearing for Proposed Changes to Oneida Charter Township Zoning Ordinance – Section 3.08 Accessory Building and Uses. There was no Public Comment. After all discussion, Motion was made by Mrs. Scherer to recommend to the Township Board that the proposed changes be approved. Support was given by Mr. Green. Motion Carried.
7. Public Comment: There was none.
8. Public Hearing on Request for Rezoning for parcel numbers 030-033-300-051-00 (8284 Otto Road), 030-033-300-030-00 (8328 Otto Road), 030-033-300-001-00 Otto Road, and 030-033-100-070-00 (Otto Road), Grand Ledge, Michigan, from A-1 Agricultural District to M-1 Light Industrial District.

Chairman Walters asked Zoning Administrator Goschka to Outline the request for rezoning for the Board. She noted the parcels and that the Sandstone Creek Solar LLC had requested rezoning to the listed parcels to allow for construction of a large solar array.

Chairman Walters noted that Mr. Zimmerman the Representative for the Sandstone Creek LLC was present as was a Representative of the Capitol Area Radio Drone Squadron, Mr. Cobb. He presented a letter to the Board in support of the proposed solar array as did Mr. Dankenbring. Chairman Walters explained that time for comments would be 10 minutes for a representative of a group and 3 minutes for individuals.

Chairman Walters asked Mr. Zimmerman to address the Board. Mr. Zimmerman referred to the Application submitted for rezoning. He discussed what he referred to as the nine standards. He said the requested area in the township was suited to the erection of a large solar project. It was ideally located meaning it was located where the substation is located. He said that two applicants said they want the solar to help them keep farming due to the unstable farm market. They feel this is the highest and best use of their property. The property is next to the sub station and the proposed development is low density and has no impact on neighbors other than Mr. Dankenbring who is the owner of the property. The project proposed is not detrimental to the people in the vicinity.

Mr. Zimmerman said a large scale solar project has low impact use, no odor, noise, no traffic and needs no infrastructure. It will be 16 feet in height and will be screened and set back from the property lines.

He further stated that it would have positive environmental impact, and an advantage to the Township. He said the Township was exclusionary to solar. He stated that there is State statute that this type of energy is needed and if allowed would stop the Township from being exclusionary. He said there was only 120 acres of land available in the light Industrial District of the Township. And it contains woodland, a storm water detention area and is associated with the Meijer development and 26 acres is zoned Agricultural. Leaving only 4 acres vacant.

Mr. Zimmerman said they had not done a market study. Geronimo has a buyer so there is no need for one. He said they are asking for a Conditional Rezoning meaning that the land can only be used for a solar array.

Mr. Zimmerman said the solar project is an open use and doesn't require utilities. He explained that they had submitted an application to amend the future land use map and it had been returned to them without action.

At this time Chairman Walters asked for comments from those present: Mr. Coakley said that the Township spent the better part of a year formulating a Solar Ordinance. Solar is a unique thing and takes up a whole lot of land. The Board has tried to set a place for solar with in the Township rather than spot zoning. He did not feel that this solar array would be low impact. It will be one of the largest in the State. He said the Township was trying to keep solar development in the Industrial area and he encouraged that. He was not in favor of the rezoning request.

Marsha McConnel said she was against the request for rezoning. She said we get no use from it and she stated that she was an environmentalist. She noted that the University has put solar in the parking lots. She thought we should do that around here and stick to the Master Plan.

Sue Dombrowski thanked the Board for their hard work and listening. She noted that years ago the Township had spot zoning and it had been corrected. She was thankful for the Master Plan and not against solar. She discussed replacing green with green. She said Prime Farmland has value. Putting solar in light Industrial is an organized way of growth, its not against solar it is preserving farmland.

Mr. Dankenbring was asked by Chairman Walters to read his letter in favor of the Solar Array and rezoning to allow it. He read it and it is attached to these minutes.

Mr. Cobb of the Radio Drone Squadron read his letter in favor of the solar rezoning and it is attached to these minutes.

Vic Tallman said he appreciated the Board action. He said we should consider that Geronimo does not own the land yet. He noted that the Solar Array could be in the Industrial Area and still run through the sub station here or in Marshall. He was not agreeable with the rezoning. He saw no benefit to the Township Residents or the Township or Schools. He felt that it would only benefit out of State Contractors. He said he had attended the Geronimo meetings at the Orchard and was not given a lot of information.

Cindy Coakley noted that GroSolar only had a 10-foot-high fence and this project was proposing 16 feet in height for the solar array. She said Geronimo said the screening would only be 6-foot-high trees, it will be 20 years before those trees cover the solar panels which only have a life span of 20 years. She also discussed division between people, threats and other problems between people who want the project and those who don't.

Mr. Park, said he felt motivated to preserve farmland, and the Master Plan. He noted we are short term stewards of the land.

Mr. Burman asked if the Township could contact other areas and see what impact Geronimo had in their areas. He felt that the brownfields along Saginaw Hwy. would be the perfect place for a Solar Array.

Chairman Walters closed the public comment and asked for questions and comments from the Board.

Mrs. Schultz said she was not against solar, she wanted to see organized growth for the Township and to preserve farmland.

Mr. Stahelin said he too wanted to see organized development and preserve farmland and had no problem with solar.

Mr. Kilgore asked about the environmental impact and how the installation of solar effects the land, he discussed loosening the soil and setback areas with grasses and pollinators. He

discussed the weight of the panels and their impact on the land when they were removed and loosening the soil.

Mr. Dankenbring said it was a savings of farmland because it could return to farming after the panels were gone.

Mr. Zimmerman was asked where the energy from the solar array would be sold. He said it would be in Michigan. He said the Buyer for Geronimo had asked to remain confidential.

Mr. Green discussed page 2 items 7 and 8, which involved removal of buildings and setback. He asked if Mr. Dankenbring would be happy to carve out 2 acres and have solar panels all around. Mr. Dankenbring said that he would. Mr. Green discussed page 4 item 2, Property Values. It is stated in the application they will not be affected. But persons in the area have tried to list homes in that proposed rezoning area and they cannot sell them. People are hearing about a large solar array in the area.

Mr. Green discussed keeping us from getting a natural gas plant, exclusionary zoning and the case noted in the rezoning application. Which had been decided in favor of the Township where it took place. He noted that we had decided on orderly progression not just due to PA 116 or prime farmland.

Chairman Walters said he felt that there are better places in this Township to put a solar array, He noted that Future Land Use could be changed in the future and there are other access points and other and better areas.

Mr. Green noted the Consumers easement from M-43 to the Substation.

After all discussion, Motion was made by Mr. Green to recommend to the Township Board the denial of the rezoning request, based on not meeting the "3 Cs", with negatives on the first 2 and the third not being applicable as delineated on page 9-2 of the Master Plan. Support was given by Mrs. Schultz. Motion Carried.

9. Update Master Plan/Review Future Land Use. Chairman Walters asked Zoning Chairman Goschka to discuss the action necessary to achieve the Review. She said we need to update the Master Plan every five years and we can look at Future land Use at the same time. Chairman Walters said he had a copy of the Watertown Review and Update and would like to share it with the Board. Mrs. Schultz noted that we had a Township Board Member who has a problem with proof of agency or/ and proof of ownership regarding requirements for rezoning. Mr. Stahelin supports this review, he feels that the Master Plan is the backbone of all that we do. We need to keep it updated but not so structured as to allow us room in making decisions.

Zoning Administrator Goschka said she thought we might also update and review the Wind Ordinance which had been adopted in 2012. Supervisor Cooley had brought a PowerPoint program from the MTA Convention that might be of assistance.

Chairman Walters asked if there was any other business to come before the Board. There was none.

Motion was made by Mr. Stahelin and supported by Chairman Walters to adjourn at 8:05 p.m. Motion Carried. Meeting Adjourned.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Jan Schultz

APPROVED:

MICHAEL WALTERS, CHAIRMAN

DRAFT