



Bear Lake County

Planning & Zoning Commission

30 N Main Street

Paris, Idaho 83261

Phone: 435-946-2198

TO: **BEAR LAKE COUNTY PLANNING & ZONING COMMISSION**
FROM: Albert Johnson, Chairman, Bear Lake County Planning & Zoning Commission
DATE: Tuesday, Feb 7, 2023
RE: Bear Lake County Planning and Zoning Meeting

The Bear Lake County Planning & Zoning Commission will hold the regularly scheduled meeting on Wednesday, February 15, 2023 at 7:00 pm At the Bear Lake County Courthouse 30 N. Main Paris, Idaho.

Public Hearings:

Jason Merritt/ Rezone- 1107 Horse Channel Lane, Dingle

Aurora Solar/ Conditional Use Permit- 4700 acres Pegram area, south to Utah border
Township 16 South, Range 45 E. parts of Section 2,11,12,13 and all of sections 14,23,24,25,26.

Action Items

1. Approval of Agenda
2. Election of Officers
3. Jason Merritt/ Rezone- 1107 Horse Channel Lane, Dingle
4. Jason Merritt/ lotsplit- 1107 Horse Channel Lane, Dingle
5. Aurora Solar/ Conditional Use Permit- 4700 acres Pegram area, south to Utah border
6. Kyle Hyde/Lot Split- Reese Lane
7. Work meeting
8. Old Business
9. Approval of minutes
10. Adjournment



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PLANNING & ZONING MEETING
February 15, 2023
Paris Courthouse Commissioner's Room
PARIS, ID.

ATTENDANCE: CHAIRMAN ALBERT JOHNSON
KRISTY CRANE -VICE CHAIRMAN
SEAN BARTSCHI
DEVIN BOEHME
ROB SMITH
PATRICK REESE---Excused
MITCH POULSEN, ADMINISTRATOR
WAYNE DAVIDSON, SECRETARY

Chairman Johnson welcomes everyone at 7pm and asks Mitch Poulsen to lead the pledge of allegiance.

One addition to the agenda to discuss proposed legislation for Idaho.

- **Motion to approve the agenda** is made by Kristy Crane, seconded by Rob Smith all in favor.

Chairman Johnson explains he board handle some of the simpler things on the agenda first so they won't have to wait so long.

- **Motion to go into hearing for Jason Merritt Rezone** is made by Devin Boehme, seconded by Rob Smith, all in favor.

Mic Merritt represents Jason Merritt. Jason wants to rezone to community expansion. He has cattle and wants to split off some land so he can build a house and run the cows easier, will have wells and septic. County plows the road. Mitch says this is clear cut but there is a lot of water there. It's been in the family for some time. They know where the water is and will build the house on the high ground.

No comments from the audience.

- **Motion to close the Jason Merritt Rezone hearing** is made by Sean Bartschi, seconded by Kristy Crane, all in favor.

- **Motion to approve the Jason Merritt rezone** to Community Expansion is made by Sean Bartschi, seconded by Devin Boehme, all in favor.
- **Motion to approve the lot split for Jason Merritt** at 1107 Horse Channel Lane, Dingle ID is made by Kristy Crane, seconded by Devin Boehme, all in favor.

Kyle Hyde lot split. Kyle and Gay Hyde present.

Mitch says this is on the edge of Bloomington community, everything is in order.

- **Motion to approve the Kyle Hyde lot split** is made by Kristy Crane, seconded by Sean Bartschi, all in favor.
- **Motion to open hearing for Aurora Solar Conditional use permit** is made by Sean Bartschi, seconded by Devin Boehme, all in favor.

A representative for Aurora, Tyler approaches, they have a power point presentation. They are in 22 states installing wind and solar. The company is on the stock exchange. This project will be about 325 megawatts. The proposal is in an area called Poverty Flats in Bear Lake County. There are two private landowners with 4700 acers where this solar farm will be. Only about 60% of the land will be covered with solar panels. It's currently range land. It was selected because it's mostly flat, remote, and has access to transmission lines. Currently a power facility is shutting down and this can replace that. Aurora is trying to not impact the land for future use. By 2025 they want to start with permits and start building in 2026. This is in response to Pacific Corp asking for more power. Construction is on concrete piles driven into ground, and it will have trackers to track the sun. Project studies started in 2020, and they will do wet land study too. This benefits Idaho since it has a gross revenue tax and will glean 3.5 million in tax back to the county. Will have about 150 to 200 jobs to build it then not much after it's built. No smells or dust in operation, no noise. Will have security fencing. Project decommissioning at the end of the life cycle they will take everything out. Estimated life cycle typically 25 years. They have signed a lease for 40 years.

After some questions from the board more information is learned.

The panels on the ground don't cover all the ground. RFP is a request for power sent out by Rocky Mountain Power. They are always looking for the ability to produce more power. They are looking ahead for more power since there is always more required. There have been some questions about how the Fish and Game feels about this. Will it affect the animals, mule deer, pygmy rabbits, sage grouse? Aurora will plant vegetation which will help the sage grouse and rabbits. They have meetings planned with F&G to plan for wildlife and will work with F & G to find solutions. There will be fencing, and it will only be around the perimeter of the facility, not the 4700 acers. The road that is there will remain and be improved. They will need some form of year-round access, possibly track machines in the winter. They have 100% site control with the owners. They won't cross or access land that isn't in scope. Construction traffic will be over Pegram Rd. Will have to mitigate dust on the county road. There are federal requirements for dust control. How likely will the project go more than 25 years? Not sure no solar project is that old. If extended, they're not sure how it will look since technology is changing all the time. Solar panels might look different in 20 years. The labor will be filled by the contractor. If they find local help that is capable, they will use them. Decommissioning, what do you do with the solar panels

when done? They are primarily silicone based. Could be recycled, Europe is trying it. 98% of the panels are recyclable. Conduit below 3' deep will be left unless the county requires something different. Viewing this, it can only be seen from on top of the nearby hills. No houses nearby. Will this be the last time they come to the board? They still don't know all the answers. They are in the planning stage now. Mitch says there isn't a lot to worry about. The County's Attorney suggests not going out for a bond. Construction will be 12 to 18 months. Then there will be almost no traffic.

There was an environmental study done, they studied animals and have scheduled surveys. The project already has two transmission lines and a pipeline crossing the land. So, this area has been disturbed already. They are still moving forward with their study and design. Want to know if they can move forward. Will work with agencies for the next 2.5 years.

From the audience

In favor, Casey Jones is not an electrical expert, but questions the costs. What's the return? Will it cost the customer more? Answer Rocky Mountain Power analyzes the impact costs. Some upgrades are paid for by the developer and some by the customer.

Roy Bunderson is a believer in private property rights as long as they don't infringe on others, Romrels have been paying taxes on that ground since 1970. Don't like people telling him what he can do on his land. If we get a higher and better use out of the land it's good. This project won't be seen by people in normal passing.

Cannon Crane approves private landowners doing what they want.

Jason Lutz, neutral, says there are going to be three solar farms in the area soon. Are they competing? Answer, yes sort of. Pacific Corp could choose one or all three.

Bryce Bunderson 1863 his great great grandfather came here. He has been ranching on the ground, it's not productive. Tried to keep AG alive. This could keep AG alive in the valley by putting money back into the valley. No one will see this. Freedom to use their own land.

Against

Josh Ottero solar in general isn't a solid energy source we will need more not sure it will work.

Lewis Chandler, how many panels will there be? They don't know yet.

Randel Knight Garden city UT against, what about erosion from rain runoff?

Daniel Fillean the county could use the money generated. Concern about environmental issues. He wants the county to see the paperwork is completed correctly.

Mechel Filliean money looks good but not about the money. Questions about wildlife. Will impact a lot of animals. How many acres will be covered with panels. What type of fence will it be? Will the noise affect the animals? What about lighting? Animals have the right to be here.

Rebuttal Allana says there will be effects on the animals, but the studies are continuing with the F & G to help the animals. They will provide corridors and access for animals. This is an area that is already disturbed by other utilities. Fencing doesn't keep everything out. Will try to not disturb plants too much. Acres with panels are still in design, but they are thinking 60 - 70% of the ground covered with panels. Not aware of studies that show solar panels affect animals from noise. Lighting will be pointing down and around the structures.

Jeremy Rock from Fish and Wildlife not for or against but asks what is the battery storage looking like? What is the fire response? If there is vegetation there what is the fire risk? Wants to address what the decommission will look like. How to assure the taxpayer doesn't pay for it.

Leo Wagner asks is there any plan for housing the employees?

Jason Lowry Idaho Solid waste. Life cycle of panels and end of life disposal.

Tyler what do the batteries look like? They are closed and have their own fire suppression system and on gravel noncombustible places. Looks like a container. Fire response will

coordinate with the fire department. Decommissioning plan, they will present a plan as the board requires. Housing for employees, a lot of them travel, rent houses, they find their own place. Life cycle of the panel? He mentioned before that after 20 years they are still above 90 % production. Don't know where they will go. He expects the recycling plants will grow as the need grows. Fire response, there will be a road around it. They will work to plant things that will do well in the area. The goal is to avoid invasive species.
Liona Burdick in favor sees the need going forward.

- **Motion to close the hearing for Aurora Solar Conditional use permit** is made by Devin Boehme, seconded by Rob Smith, all in favor.

Discussion other counties receive natural resource revenue. Most of the things our county sees are residential based. Usually costing more to the county than they earn for the county. It's an opportunity for the county. Could be the best location in the county. Should review the plans when they have them completed before construction.
Some conditions for approval are see a final plan, battery pack substation, wildlife plan, wildfire plan, decommissioning plan, a plan to not allow the stuff in the county landfill.

- **Motion to approve the Aurora Solar Conditional use permit** with the conditions of a final infrastructure plan, a wildlife plan, a wildfire plan, a year-round transportation plan, a decommissioning plan a plan to not allow the stuff in the county landfill is made by Sean Bartschi, seconded by Kristy Crane, all in favor.

Election of officers

- **Motion to keep them the same as they are**, Albert Johnson Chairman, Kristy Crane Assistant Chairman, is made by Devin Boehme, seconded by Sean Bartschi, all in favor.

Mitch says there is Legislation in Idaho that will reform our impact areas. It will be a big change. Don't know where it's coming from.

- **Motion to approve the minutes** from the last meeting is made by Kristy Crane, seconded by Sean Bartschi, all in favor.
- **Motion to adjourn** the meeting is made by Kristy Crane, second by Devin Boehme, all in favor at 9:13 pm.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:


Albert Johnson, Chairman


Date