

MINUTES
PAGE COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION
August 28, 2018

Members Present

Bernie Miller, District 1	Paul Otto, District 1
Donnie Middleton, District 2	Steve Atkins, District 2
Keith Weakley, Vice Chairman, District 3	James Holsinger, Secretary, District 4
Duane Painter, District 4	Craig Lancto, District 5
Jonathan Comer, Chairman, District 5	

Members Absent

James Turner, District 3

Staff Present

Tracy Clatterbuck
Nathan Miller, County Attorney

Call to Order

Chairman Comer called the August 28, 2018, Page County Planning Commission work session to order in the Board of Supervisors Room at the Page County Government Center, 103 S Court Street, Luray, Virginia, at 7:00 p.m. The call to order was followed by *The Pledge of Allegiance* and a *Moment of Silence*.

Adoption of Agenda

Mr. Lancto made a motion to accept the agenda as presented. The motion was seconded by Mr. Holsinger. The motion passed unanimously.

Public Hearing

None

Citizen Comments on Agenda Items

Chairman Comer requested that the citizen comments be kept as brief as possible so that the commission could get through the items on the agenda.

Thomas Mitchell- Mr. Mitchell observed that the last meeting ended with a chicken house statement. When chicken houses first came to Page County, there were a few. Now, there are a lot. He said that he is okay with chicken houses. The legacy that faces the Planning Commission (PC), is whether or not solar will be installed or not, and he wouldn't want to be in their shoes. He advised the PC to make the decision on what members would want for their families. This could be the beginning of what could be another chicken house scenario. Hundreds or thousands of panels in this community would not be pretty, he said. Right now, a lot of the chicken houses are empty because the demand is not as hot as it once was.

Catherine Grech- Ms. Grech said that she lives in the Hope Mills Subdivision and has been a citizen of this county for 26 years. She said that she never has been so afraid of what may happen here. The solar debate is a local issue, she said, urged the PC to focus on the economic future of Page County, as well as the well-being and interests of citizens. There are 899 acres of protected agricultural prime farmland and farmland of statewide importance that could be turned to industrial use by these special use permits (SUP). This is not a decision to be taken lightly, she said. These projects are not farms, she said, but industrial-size utilities. People have relied on our Zoning Ordinance and Comp Plan when they decided to invest here. Do we really want to reverse this long-standing policy? The Comprehensive Zoning Plan repeatedly states its intent to maintain a rural quality of life. She said that she interprets that to mean it should protect us from the invasion

of big business, but where are we now with these applications? We are told that these solar projects will cost one hundred million dollars. If that is the cost of the investment, imagine the returns. But who will benefit from those returns; only the landowners and the solar companies. What about the 100 adjacent landowners who surround these projects? What about those who live close to these proposed 8'x17' panels in their backyards with a tall wired security fence 50 feet from their property line, with no buffer to protect them? What about the beautiful view they relied on when they purchased their property? How will this affect their property values? How will it affect our future tax base, school funding, etc.? She urged the PC to listen to the dozens of citizens opposing these projects. Listen to the Luray Caverns and The Shenandoah National Park which bring a great amount of revenue to Page County. Over 5,000 cars per day traveling 340 N will have to look at the Cape Solar project. 2016 numbers from the VA Tourism Corporation indicate that tourism brings over \$67 million into Page County annually, and over \$2.5 million in county taxes. That is over 40 times more than the projected tax income from these solar projects, she said. Even if our growing tourism income numbers diminished by 10% as a result of a compromised view shed, our county would lose approximately \$7 million in tourism income annually. We all know agriculture and tourism drives this county, she said, asking what overriding interest is there to justify compromising this revenue. How many of us would lose income and/or jobs? Does any form of income, taxes, or jobs from these proposed developments even come close to compensating for these potential losses? Why were the permit fees drastically reduced by the Board of Supervisors (BOS) when our budget was so tight. We have a budget of \$59 million per year. Why are the SUP applications being rushed through without independent economic and environmental impact studies and time for the public to get informed before the public hearing? Doesn't the PC have six months from May 9, 2018, to make a recommendation? Why aren't these applications frozen and a 12-month moratorium adopted? This would allow the county time to enact rules, regulations, and limits on solar projects to protect our community's interests. Is the county prepared for the potential lawsuits that are happening in many Virginia counties regarding similar permits? One of them is proceeding to trial in Halifax County against their Board and the same solar company that applied for permits here. Why are we entertaining a request for permit duration for as long as 99 years? How strong is the decommissioning plan presented? Will it protect Page County against the cost of disposing of hundreds of thousands of possibly toxic solar panels at the cost of taxpayers if the shell companies concerned file for bankruptcy? Will they end up in our already controversial landfill? It is obvious to all that these solar projects will benefit the solar companies and owners of the land, but what about the rest of us?

JoAnn Smeltzer- Ms. Smeltzer said that this is one of the most important decisions this commission would ever have to make. She said that she does not understand why the county is even considering this, as it is only a concept plan. She encouraged the PC to do their homework about how this will affect the economy of Page County. These applications will not reduce our electric bills. Other states and countries have reported bills going up 25-50 percent. The decommissioning plan needs to be heavily reviewed. We cannot go down this road again because people don't want to do the research.

John Rogerson- Mr. Rogerson stated a man who owns property in this country should be able to do what they want, but then again, how does it affect the neighbors? This county went into debt for a landfill that was supposed to make us a lot of money. Citizens had to rise up and stop the chicken-litter burning project. Then, the Clover Project was going to make us a lot of money, but it didn't create one job and we bought land for way more than what it was worth, and if citizens hadn't stopped it we would have paid a whole lot more. These solar projects will not bring jobs or money to this county. It isn't so bad to have one project, but just like the chicken houses, people started making money and everyone wanted chicken houses. The same thing will happen to solar projects if you approve the first one, he said. This is not a good project for this county. We need to support agriculture and tourism for this county. We have the reputation of being the worst corrupt county in Virginia as stated by the previous Commissioner of Revenue and Treasurer. If you don't change that, then you won't ever get a business here. It has not been governed well.

Sonia Viands- Ms. Viands said she married into the Viands family 26 years ago. Seven years ago they built their house based on this view (photos presented), which could be where the solar panels will be located. It is unknown as to how this will affect the property value. She said that she has retained a lawyer (Matt McConnell) just to cover herself.

Rolf Gubler- Mr. Gubler stated he had previously spoken on how this [project] could affect tourism. This time, he said, he would be speaking about how this will affect ecology. He and his wife are opposed to these projects mainly because it is inconsistent with the Comp Plan. He proceeded to read Goal 2 in Volume I. Solar panels can cause disturbances in wildlife patterns, he said. One example of a species that will be affected is the American Kestrel. The Kestrel is the smallest member of the falcon family. They are a beneficial bird of prey that feeds on excess rodent populations. They are a species that is on a decline in our region due to the habitat loss of available nesting sites. Recently, there have been efforts to install nesting boxes to boost their nesting populations. These birds rely on the open ground and pasture land for finding food. A solar farm would directly impact them in the Old Farms and Parkview Estates areas. He reviewed other species that would be affected as well. Let's think about what makes sense for Page County, he said. Let's be smart about the way we approach solar energy. Put panels on our government-owned buildings.

Unfinished Business

A. Cape Solar, LLC & Dogwood Solar, LLC Special Use Permits

Mr. Jared Burden, attorney for Urban Grid, stated that during this process, they have attempted to be as transparent as they possibly can. On Friday, they delivered the binders of information for the commissioners as promised, which included information they have talked about over the last fourteen weeks and seven meetings. A solar project is a big deal, he said. It requires many months of research, equipment, implementations, jobs, and a lot of money. It is a long-term project. These applications deserve the time the PC has given, he said, and he hoped the commissioners agreed that Urban Grid has done their best to provide information that has been requested. Solar is with us for the long run, and Urban Grid is here for the long haul. Urban Grid has a long view about Page County and where it is going. The county has their continued commitment to that. Topics tonight will be directly responsive to the questions asked at previous meetings. Mr. Burden continued to review the materials included in the binders that were delivered to the commissioners.

Ms. Jessica Berger, project manager, provided the commissioners with a copy of the environmental site reports for each project. For Cape Solar, LLC, a phase one is a site assessment that looks for potential releases to the environment of hazardous substances or petroleum projects on or within the vicinity in question. These releases are called recognized environmental conditions (REC). Timmons Group, which conducted this study, concluded that was that there are no REC's identified for the subject property or adjoining properties. At this point, Timmons recommends no further assessment because they've satisfied their due diligence requirements. For Dogwood Solar, LLC, the conclusion was the same as the Cape Solar, LLC findings. Mr. Bernie Miller questioned whether saying there are no hazardous substances on the property that means now (prior to the installation of solar panels). Ms. Berger confirmed. Mr. Otto stated his concern was that if this environmental assessment only covers what exists now (prior to placement of panels), then that is not what he was asking for. He asked for an impact statement on how the environment is going to be once they are commissioned. Ms. Berger stated that could only be done after the panels are placed on the properties. Mr. Depew stated he would be reviewing additional information related to actual impacts later in the presentation.

Mr. Burden reviewed the following information regarding the Dogwood Solar, LLC project:

Rollback	Current Annual RE Taxes	Estimated Annual RE taxes for solar
\$37,005	\$1,328	\$12,548 year one
35 year estimate	\$46,480	\$522,753

They project that the tax revenue from Dogwood Solar, LLC to be \$559,758. He also reviewed the Cape Solar estimated figures that were presented at the last meeting. Mr. Bernie Miller stated that on the Dogwood Solar, LLC, he thought they were 100% exempt under state code. Mr. Burden explained that the 100% exemption is for the equipment tax. The figures shown are for the real estate tax. Mr. Miller asked if these numbers had been verified for accuracy by the Commissioner of Revenue for Page County. Ms. Clatterbuck noted that Becky Smith was not present for the meeting tonight; however, she did speak with her and as she has told the commission many times she cannot verify or confirm the estimates related to the equipment tax. Mr. Burden stated that the value of the equipment is determined by the State Corporation Commission (SCC). Urban Grid pretty much knows a lot of what that determination will be, he said, and what that tax amount would be. They expect that the equipment will be taxed at the real estate rate, which is how they came up with the numbers. Urban Grid does not see a lot of mystery there. These tax numbers for Dogwood and Cape Solar (to include the equipment tax) are viewed as minimums. Urban Grid (UG) has every commitment and desire to pay either these amounts or the economic equivalent of these taxation amounts. If the taxes don't turn out to be as indicated, UG would make good on these numbers through economic support for important programs in the county (pilot projects). Urban Grid is committed to making these numbers true. With respect to Dogwood and the 100% exempt equipment tax that exists under the Virginia code, Urban Grid is willing to treat it the same as the Cape project. As such they would want to and are willing to have the same taxation regime placed on them. That is that they would be willing to pay taxes at the same rate. What you see above, without mention of equipment, as far as what the official tax revenue will be, what we said with respect to Cape where they totaled up an equipment tax figure and an annual real estate tax figure and presented a combined amount, is what Urban Grid wants to do for taxes with Dogwood. We want to make it right, and not take the benefit of the tax opportunity that the Virginia code allows.

Mr. Nathan Miller, PC counsel, questioned whether the county could put a condition that Urban Grid would be willing to treat the property tax arrangement for 20 MWs the same as any other tax in spite of the state code in the SUP. Mr. Burden replied that they are saying that in over 20 MW projects there is an 80% exemption. Mr. Nathan Miller interrupted to say, they would use the same formula for the Dogwood project (meaning they would pay 20% on equipment tax), and Mr. Burden confirmed.

Mr. Frank DePew, Urban Grid CEO, stated that they are saying that there is a larger tax regime that is reasonable and fair and makes the projects work and rewards the county as well. 20 MW projects are 100% equipment tax exempt. That is not the way Urban Grid thinks that it should be done or is a fair approach. So they are willing to be taxed the same way (20% on equipment) as the Cape project. It may not be a tax; it could be a pilot project or something else the county puts in place. UG is willing to pay the net present value of that upfront for purposes the county needs, or pay it as they go according to equipment tax. The projects are economically viable with that stipulation in them and so that is what they want to offer. They understand the county needs revenue from these things because a lot of money is going to be put into them. UG is willing to stipulate that the numbers will not be any worse than the estimates provided in the binders. If the numbers are wrong, they will pay the minimum amounts listed on those documents. If it is more, they would pay more. They are willing to stand behind those numbers and pay that minimum amount if the projects move forward. Mr. Painter asked if he knew what that value was now, and Mr. DePew noted that it was in the binder. They have done pilot programs in other projects. He stated they were waving the exemption as it relates to the smaller project but they are going to be taxed according to the larger project. They cannot afford to pay 100% of the equipment and tool tax. Chairman Comer asked Mr. Nathan Miller how they would address that in the SUP. Mr. Miller responded that it would be a condition of the permit. It's not a proffer and they can't call it a tax because that would put it under another provision of the state code. That is why they call them pilot programs. Mr. Painter asked if they could provide documentation from another project as an example. Mr. DePew stated they could provide an example of a payment in lieu of taxes that has been done in other locations. Chairman Comer asked whether specifics of the pilot program would have to be written

into the condition. Mr. Miller replied that if a payment is not taken upfront (present value) then the BOS would need to decide if they want to take it up front or take it as you go throughout the years. He would write the SUP so that it is open enough so that those decisions can be made at a later date. If they don't comply then they will be in violation of the SUP.

Mr. Depew said that the solar workforce development program was also included in the binder. A number of developers, community college officials, and a number of ECP construction companies have gotten together to begin training programs at a number of technical schools and colleges around the state. Virginia expects to have 25 gigawatts of solar energy, 50 times the Dogwood project, in place in Virginia through 2023. Dominion has committed to build at least 3 gigawatts of solar. Solar is coming to counties in Virginia. It really does have a lot of positive impact. There is haze in the valley, most of which is coming from gas and coal plants up the Ohio Valley that is drifting down here. Dominion is shutting a number of those plants down as they age or become economically unviable. This is good because it will help the view in the valley. They are expecting many full-time jobs while this is going on. The people in the audience are right when they say these facilities don't create a lot of full-time jobs over time. Each one of these plants have 2-3 full-time jobs when they are the size of the Cape plant. There are a lot of construction jobs in this project. Some are skilled labor and some are unskilled. Closer to construction there will be a job fair in the area. They will have more jobs than people to fill. They have meetings set up with local community colleges to further discuss programs.

Mr. Colin Mott, (interconnection expert), stated that he is a professional engineer in Virginia, currently employed with Urban Grid. Prior to joining Urban Grid, he spent a decade in various management roles with Dominion. He presented and reviewed a diagram showing how these projects are connected to the grid. Electricity follows the path of least resistance, he explained. Longer transmission lines have a higher resistance. There have been a lot of comments made that all this power will be used in Northern Virginia, which is not true. That is not how the electric grid works. There are many large corporations that would love to have it set up that way, he added. The shorter the lines, the more likely the load will follow that path. Loads closer to the generation are likely to consume power before loads that are farther away. In other words, the electricity generated by these projects will be used locally. There is no doubt about it. The PJM feasibility study is a high level review of the impact to the generator on the local power system. It is a multiple-month review completed by engineers at PJM, reviewing local power systems, the grid as a whole, and the impacts to the local system. It identifies system upgrades, if any, that would be needed to support the projects. Mr. Bernie Miller asked what a system upgrade was. Mr. Mott replied that the power system is comprised of many different parts. There are transmission lines, circuit breakers, protective equipment that is required for operating the grid, etc. All of those devices have a certain amount of load they can carry or customers they can feed. When we say system upgrades, he explained that what they are looking for is can the transmission system in the area support the addition of the power onto the grid. Mr. Miller asked how that was determined. Mr. Mott replied that there is complex modeling software that is used. They do planning studies to understand where the loads are going. There are no upgrades required to these lines for these projects. Mr. Miller asked about the capacity of the lines. Mr. Mott noted that the infrastructure here will not support a bunch more solar projects in this area. There is not enough capacity to support additional projects. Let's say this project puts the line at 99% and the next project that comes along puts it over 100% and requires additional lines. The next project would be responsible for upgrading the lines which is usually not financially feasible. Upgrades to lines for multiple projects would make them unviable. Mr. Painter asked what the capacity of the line was, and Mr. Mott said he would get the results from the feasibility study specifically for these projects. There was further discussion among the applicant and commissioners related to theoretical instances for which transmission lines could require upgrades and what that process would look like.

Mr. Depew reviewed items in the binder provided to the commissioners, including safety of panels, glare, noise, etc. He also said that he could not understand how these projects could affect tourism in Page County. A lot of people have come to the podium stating this but really haven't brought factual reasons or examples that back this concern up. Mr. Depew said, in his opinion, these solar projects could do quite the opposite and help tourism because people like to see these types of facilities so they can teach their children about renewable energy.

In conclusion, Mr. Burden stated that Urban Grid is ready and willing to answer any questions that the commissioners may have. Concerning the "substantially in accord" determination regarding the Comp Plan, he reviewed the portions of the state code, county Comp Plan, etc. that were provided in the narrative of the SUP applications. He told the commissioners they wouldn't be sitting there if things weren't meant to change. The commissioners' role is about the future. These projects will create clean, renewable energy, and the land will remain suitable to go return to agricultural use. He expressed his hope that the commission would be able to determine that these projects are in substantial accord with the Comp Plan.

Mr. Nathan Miller noted that if anyone in the public wanted copies of the binders provided by the applicant, they would have to put in a Freedom of Information Act request to Regina Miller, Assistant County Administrator.

Mr. Holsinger suggested that the Comp Plan subcommittee provide an opinion on if and how these projects fit into the Comp Plan, since they are currently working on updates to the plan. Mr. Otto noted that he is the chairman of the subcommittee and has been working on the plan for a while so he feels he is qualified to speak on the plan. He explained that Mr. Weakley had provided an opinion/statements to the commissioners on the Comp Plan at a previous meeting, and he wanted to address some of those statements especially the word "temporary." He stated he did not feel that 99 years was a temporary use. He would hardly consider 30 years temporary. The applicant is requesting 99 year permits which is three generations forward, not to mention, those that are already here that will be impacted. One of the purposes of the plan is to look forward. We should be looking forward at least 20 years, but with this they are requesting we look forward 99 years. It makes parts of the plan that speak to this issue even more important. Mr. Otto said he had gone through the plan and found more than ten goals that he feels are particularly pertinent to this use. Both projects are located in the agriculture protection tier. He reviewed Section 2.2 of Volume I. In his opinion, he does not see how these projects serve the needs of the residents and they are definitely not agriculture related. He further reviewed the following areas: Chapter 3, Goal 1, policy 1.1, 1.4, and 1.9; Goal 2, policy 2.2, 2.4, 2.13, 2.24; Goal 3, policy 3.2, 3.3, 3.4, 3.6, 3.10; Goal 5, policy 5.9, 5.14, 5.15, 5.17; Goal 6. Policy 6.2ng 6.4, 6.10; Goal 9, policy 9.4; and Goal 10, policy 10.2. Mr. Otto concluded by saying that if you take all of what he just pointed out into consideration, he doesn't see how anybody conscientiously could say that the plan supports these projects, or that these projects are in accordance with the plan.

Mr. Weakley stated that was not what he stated in his email to the commission. Mr. Otto stated he was not arguing specifically with Mr. Weakley, just that based on what he read, in his opinion, the plan does not support these applications, nor are the projects in accord with the intent of the plan. Mr. Weakley replied that he felt that the applications were not in compliance with the spirit, but didn't violate the letter. He disagreed with Mr. Otto's creative interpretation of *temporary*. A broken arm is temporary, and an amputated arm is permanent. Mr. Otto stated they could argue that point all night long, but suggested they tell the first and second forthcoming generations that it is temporary.

Mr. Bernie Miller stated he agreed with Mr. Otto on the interpretation of what temporary means. These applications sound open-ended based on how the applicant has presented: 99 years with the possibility of

renewing. He said that he did not see utility companies ever letting this thing up. He does not see it as a temporary use. He said that he found Mr. Holmes presentation, specifically about the soils, very interesting.

Mr. Weakley asked the members of the subcommittee reviewing the Comp Plan, what the current Comp Plan says about solar farms. Mr. Otto replied that the current plan did not say anything about industrial solar projects. Mr. Weakley asked if it said anything about solar at all? Mr. Otto replied that he couldn't quote that section, but he believed there was a reference to small scale usage. Mr. Weakley asked if there was an opportunity to add it to the plan. Mr. Holsinger and Mr. Otto agreed that it would be prudent to add language specifically related to industrial solar farms. Mr. Weakley stated he did not disagree with Mr. Otto's references. He just disagreed that it violates the letter. It certainly violates the spirit, he said, but he feels we have an opportunity to fix it now since the new plan draft is not complete. Mr. Otto agreed; however, they have not gotten to that section yet. Mr. Miller asked in what way they would include it in the plan. Mr. Otto suggested putting language into the plan that would offer guidance on how these projects should be handled, etc. Mr. Weakley suggested that the subcommittee take a look at the state code in relation to what it says about solar farms, and could possibly piggyback that language. Mr. Painter noted there would be a disagreement if they do that because some call them solar farms and some call them industrial solar sites. Mr. Weakley stated they could define them how they wanted to in the plan. Mr. Holsinger suggested not calling them either of those definitions to avoid conflict and interpretation. Mr. Otto replied that the Comp Plan subcommittee would examine the state code and go from there to make recommendation on what should be included in the plan. Mr. Holsinger stated there was nothing in the plan that said you couldn't do small or large scale solar. It just doesn't address it in a manner that makes it not possible for the owners of these properties to make application and seek our assistance. Not that you are not allowed to do it, it is more about how it is, as opposed to not being able to have it. He4 suggested that it might require a SUP as they have done. This group is relatively new, and have had many discussions on how difficult it is to screen anything in Page County because of our topography. Very often they have wrestled with that as you can see from the elevations. So very often, we have had to set that aside in our meetings which is a very difficult thing to do here because we have the National Park, not focusing on their big problem which is acid rain, but talking about the viewshed. The plan manages that through screening but we don't live in a place where things are easy to screen. Mr. Holsinger stated he seen nothing in the plan that denied the applications, or denied the commission from moving forward. He thinks it will shake down to what is in the SUP which will be the hard work after they deal with the Comp Plan.

Mr. Painter stated he agreed with a lot of what Mr. Holsinger had stated. However, Mr. Otto was correct when he said when the plan was being reviewed the last time, there was no thoughts of solar farms.

Mr. Lancto stated he also agreed with Mr. Holsinger. He thought the solar facility is something that is unique and doesn't fit very neatly into the categories we have been talking about, and therefore, he thinks they can find it in compliance or substantially not in compliance not necessary based on all those citations that Mr. Otto presented but based on common sense and a more liberal reading of what the Comp Plan is asking of us. He suggested the commission defer the conversation on this to the next meeting because there are additional items on the agenda.

B. Presentation from Piedmont Environmental Council

Mr. Dan Holmes, Director of State Policy with the Piedmont Environmental Council, presented information suggesting that the county should consider addressing things such as Comp Plan, solar ordinance, setback requirements, how this will affect property values, the use of agriculture land for these industrial type of solar facilities, decommissioning, etc.

C. Comp Plan Committee Report

Mr. Otto stated they are still working on Chapter 9, Land Use, and Chapter 7. They are waiting for additional information from GIS before they proceed.

D. Subdivision Committee Report
No Report

Open Citizen Comment Period

Margaret Stevenson- Mrs. Stevenson thanked the commission for their hard work. She stated that the county had been presented a beautiful picture by the applicants, but she disagreed. Two solar projects in the county will destroy many things such as water, health, etc. Studies have been published over the past 10 years. The negative impacts outweigh any benefit, she said. Tourism will shrivel up and die. Our view from the parks will be littered with solar panels. Our millions of visitors will be disgusted at what they see from every direction. The farmland will never be the same, and the wildlife will die. The birds will not survive the heat from the panels. The bees that we need for pollination will die. Our farmland will lie dormant. Water will be contaminated and full of poison. She said that she lives in Hope Mills Subdivision and they will not be able to use their water. Page County is a unique wonderful place, she said. Can we really afford something that will destroy so much? Plus, no one benefits except the landowners and investors. Why trade our health for them to profit? Our children and grandchildren are depending on us to take a stand, as our lives depend on it.

Kim Harper- Ms. Harper stated she understood there are a lot of people who have voiced their opposition to the solar projects. She is not sure she understands the dislike, distrust, distaste, or whatever it is. There is no noise, dust, traffic, crime, or additional county services. The solar farms will pay more in taxes than agriculture use does. Solar farms are clean, and depending on your taste, can look good as well. Solar farms don't make bad neighbors which you could get if the applications aren't approved. They don't cause pollution, nor do they have that familiar Page County smell either. As a VA Corporative Master Gardner, she enjoys the beauty of the land just like everyone else. The panels will not kill birds. It will allow for native species to flourish and make fertile habitats for bees, butterflies, etc. These lands are pastureland, not farmland. If they are allowed to go back to pastureland then there will be no negative impact. Solar farms won't take away from Page County. Families will bring their kids here to look at the farms. Progress is here and change is inevitable. They say that there are proposed solar projects all over the state. She lives near Kennedy's Peak and there are little things that impair her view such as lights on the ball field all night long, but she is looking for the best for her family and that is here. Most people here must be opposed to fossil fuels, and this is a viable alternative. Virginia didn't start building wind farms until 2016. Solar is growing all over the country. In New Jersey they have determined solar to be inherently beneficial which means solar cannot be stopped just because we don't want to see it.

Isabel Graves- Mrs. Graves stated she had been a citizen in Page County for two years. One of the things she most loves about this county is the Shenandoah National Park. She is not against solar or wind energy but feels this is too big of a project for our valley, and that they will impact the park views in a very negative way. This is an iconic piece of cultural and natural heritage. She believes 99 years is a horrible mistake and is against the projects.

Catherine Grech- Ms. Grech stated she had picked out five statements made by Urban Grid that she would like to address. The first one being that the solar farms would change the haze but we have Shenandoah National Park saying the contrary. Secondly, that hurricanes don't affect the solar farms, but she encourage the commissioners to look at the pictures of the site in Puerto Rico and you will see that is just not true. Third, they say they are in in for the long run, but five minutes later tell us they sold two projects to Dominion just two weeks before; they are not in it for the long run. Compare the income they are showing us for these projects for the next 35 years to \$87 million that we get from tourism. Lastly, the explosive growth of solar

energy. She has figures, she said, of the total primary energy consumption by source that come from the US Energy for Information Administration. 2017 figures show fossil fuels 27%, renewables 11%, nuclear 8.4%, solar 0.79%. Not even one percent of energy consumption came from solar in 2017. Why do the solar plants have to be backed up by other sources? Could it be that the solar industry is driven by credits and subsidies that cost taxpayers money. Why are they here? We don't even have enough sunlight compared to other locations.

JoAnn Smeltzer- Ms. Smeltzer stated she felt that they had enough or just as much literature to contradict what Mr. Depew has presented about the toxins in the panels.

John Rogerson- Mr. Rogerson stated we had gotten projects here that were supposed to make us a lot of money but have done nothing but cost us. That is why taxes are so high. There are counties in Virginia that have scrub land where these solar panels could go. This county was blessed by God with a beautiful place. Why do people want to come in here and make a national dump for everyone's trash from New York, New Jersey, etc. Why do people want to come in here to burn chicken litter? Why do they keep picking on this county? It may be because there are not enough people in power who understand what is going on because they think we are going to make money. Property values will go down surrounding the proposed sites, he said. We need to keep the county the way it is and follow the Comp Plan.

Aaron Weakley- Mr. Weakley stated that Mr. Burden had stated that a solar project was a big deal, but, he said, most would agree that it is a really bad deal for Page County. He is struggling to understand after Mr. Otto's review of the Comp Plan and other comments made by citizens, how anyone could not feel these projects are in direct contradiction with the goals of our county. In striving to decide what a solar farm is, we get really close to fuzzing the lines of the Comp Plan, and we need to be very careful of that. The other thing he said he struggles to understand is why we would do this without understanding fully the effects on our economy, landowners, tourism industry, etc. Taking the binders provided by the applicants as gospel would be like taking the word of a shady car salesman that the vehicle you just bought wasn't going to explode when you drive it off the lot. In all seriousness, he said, if we are going to say we understand the impact, then we need an independent commission to evaluate that. The county picks the commission and the applicants should pay for it. We are moving forward at a dangerous pace without understanding the full effects. Also, in that binder, it will tell you that Mr. Depew, before he was at Urban Grid, started off a very large investment company. He is a finance guy. He didn't have a renewable energy company. One thing he is good at is very creatively harvesting profit, and that is all this is. The same thing will happen here, he said, just like Surry, where they sold those projects before they even dug the ground. Solar will cost the citizens, and the profits will be on the backs of Urban Grid. We should be pretty insulted that they are even here. They either saw us as obtuse, backwards, easy prey, or an opportunity to make a really lucrative deal on the backs of Page County. No one wants that.

Clyde Humphrey- Mr. Humphrey stated that the numbers they showed for the Dogwood site breaks down to sixteen thousand per year for the next 35 years. For the Cape site, that breaks down to 330,000 per year for the next 35 years. Are we going to sell the beauty of the county for peanuts? That amount is so insignificant that it should be ignored. He purchased a house because of the beauty around it. He will only be 500 feet from the cape site and it covers 180 degrees of his views. The reason he bought the property will be destroyed and his property value will fall significantly.

Tom Mitchell- Mr. Mitchell stated he had been attending all of the meetings and what he was starting to see was a bully called their attorney. This ain't about money. This is trying to make sure you don't get sued later. The budget was done without the thought that he is making money on that land now with cattle, which the county collects taxes on. The applicants have said our lines won't hold a bunch of solar projects but we can't control upgrades to those lines. If they want to upgrade them, they will. There are big numbers related to

tourism that will be affected. For the person who says they don't understand the view shed issues, clearly have never been hiking. So go up on the mountain and take a hike and you will understand. The question shouldn't be whether it should be here, the question should be whether the county will get sued in the end.

Chairman's Report

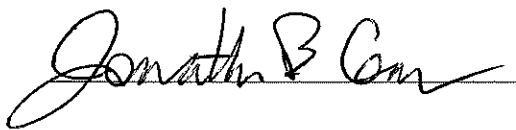
No Report

Clerk's Report

Ms. Clatterback reminded the commissioners that the next meeting would be the public hearing on the solar applications. She encouraged the commissioners to do their best to attend the meeting.

Adjourn

Chairman Comer adjourned the meeting at 10:23 p.m.

Handwritten signature of Jonathan B. Comer in cursive script, written over a horizontal line.Handwritten signature of Anne R. Hensley in cursive script, written over a horizontal line.