

POLK COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
TUESDAY MEETING MINUTES
August 7, 2018

1. At 9:03 a.m., Commissioner Ainsworth declared the Tuesday meeting of the Polk County Board of Commissioners in session. Commissioner Pope was present. Commissioner Wheeler was excused.

2. **MINUTES** **COMMISSIONER POPE MOVED, COMMISSIONER AINSWORTH
SECONDED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF JULY 31, 2018**

MOTION PASSED BY UNANIMOUS VOTE OF THE QUORUM.

3. **SOLAR ARRAYS ON EFU LAND** – Sara Deumling of 4550 Oak Grove Rd, Rickreall OR 97371, stated that she appears before the Board of Commissioners to voice the concerns of some Polk County residents who have contacted Friends of Polk County with concerns about the siting of solar facilities on farmland in Polk County. She stated that she is in support of using solar energy but not in support of it being placed on high value farmland. She refers to Goal 3 of Oregon State land use planning is to protect valuable agriculture lands from conversion to non-farm uses unless there is a demonstrated need consistent with LCDC planning goals. She stated the following are their concerns or concerns that have been expressed to them by county citizens: the conversion of High Value Farmland (HVF) both individually and collectively; the need to consider alternatives that do not involve HVF; the effectiveness of current review requirements related to the implications of solar development on surrounding farm operations; the consideration of the cumulative impacts of the loss of agricultural land and the ability of area farms to operate effectively; the stability of commercial solar operations and the finances to rehabilitate farm land after the lease expires.

She stated she would like to encourage the Board to form a work group to consider some other questions Friends of Polk County feel are important to address. Ms. Deumling handed out a testimony which included those five questions and they are as follows:

- What is the possibility and what are the steps toward a moratorium on solar land use applications (such as have taken place in Marion and Yamhill Counties) at least until DLCD has completed its rulemaking process for this issue?
- Complete a review and analysis of the criteria used to approve solar facilities in light of issues raised in this memo.
- Engage in a more thorough consideration of cumulative impacts on nearby landowners, wildlife, livestock, soils, etc.
- Consider alternative locations for solar arrays that don't involve HVF soils. Agricultural land is soil dependent. Solar arrays don't need HVF soil.
- Address the need for financial bonding or other assurances to mitigate removal and restoration of sites approved for the solar facilities to their original agricultural production capacity.

Pat Wheeler of 1209 Rolling Hills Rd, Monmouth OR 97361, also appeared with Ms. Deumling to voice her concerns. Pat stated that she feels there should be no solar development on high value farm land. She also said that she believe agriculture is a big part of our community and it needs to be preserved. She is concerned that with Marion County putting a ban on solar facilities development that it will cause more demand for these developers to look at Polk County as another option.

Austin McGuigan, Polk County Community Development Director, was asked to respond by Commissioner Ainsworth. Mr. McGuigan stated that he has not had any concerns with solar development in Polk County because he has not seen an increase in requests for them. He stated that he believe LCDC wants to protect agriculture land. LCDC has created a temporary rule that has

eliminated the language that would possibly allow solar facilities that do not conform to the intent of LCDC rule.

Commissioner Pope has asked Ms. Deumling and Ms. Wheeler they believe the planning commission is capable of having this conversation instead of creating another workgroup. Ms. Wheeler said that yes she does believe that with some outside input the planning commission could address these concerns but she believes it is fairly low on the list of priorities on the agenda and that the planning commission is not very proactive. Commissioner Pope stated that he believes that it is not that the planning commission is not proactive but that they need to be given some more information in the matter.

Commissioner Ainsworth said he can see it from both points of view and that they will not be making a decision today. They would like Commissioner Wheeler to hear about the discussion that was had today.

4. **NON-LISTED ITEMS** – (Pursuant to ORS 192.640, the Board of Commissioners considered the below identified non-listed items.)

Commissioner Ainsworth adjourned the meeting at 09:25 a.m.

Minutes: Ciera Atha
Approved: August 14, 2018