

Westfield Township Board of Trustees

Public Hearing for Solar Panel Language August 18, 2014

Trustee Likley calls the Public Hearing to order at 6:00 PM. Roll call: Thombs- aye, Schmidt- aye, Likley- aye.

The Public Hearing is to review the proposed text amendment from the Zoning Commission on Solar Panel Language. It is the duty of the trustees to approve, deny or amend (by a majority vote) the Solar Panel Language that is proposed in Section 205, Accessory Structures and Uses in the Westfield Township Zoning code.

Likley mentions that the meeting notice was properly published in the Medina Gazette and on the Westfield Township website. The Zoning Commission also contacted the Medina County Planning Services for staff recommendations. The Westfield Township Zoning Commission voted unanimously on the language submitted to the trustees on July 8, 2014.

Public Comment

None- There are no participants.

Thombs wanted to know what would happen if the trustees voted no to this proposed language. Likley stated that they can remand it back to ZC or amend the language or the proposed text could just die. Likley said that it was basic language and that Accessory Structures were a permitted use in all of the districts in the township.

Likley then read the language:

Proposed Amendments: The proposed amendment provides for a new Subsection L, Solar Panels within Section 205 Accessory Structures and Uses of Article II General Regulations This amendment proposed by the Westfield Township Zoning Commission provides for Solar panels as a permitted accessory use in all districts.

ARTICLE II GENERAL REGULATIONS

Section 205 ACCESSORY STRUCTURES AND USES

L. SOLAR PANELS

Solar panels are a permitted accessory use, subject to the following requirements:

1. Ground-mounted solar panels shall be located in the side or rear yard only in accordance with the setbacks established for all accessory uses, and shall not exceed the height requirement for all accessory uses of twelve (12) feet in height.
2. Roof-mounted solar panels on the principal building/ and or accessory buildings shall be installed on the plane of the roof material (flush mounted) or made part of the roof design (e.g. utilizing capping or framing compatible with the color of the roof or structure), but shall not extend more than eight inches from the roof surface.
3. All solar panel installations shall comply with all applicable building,

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plumbing, and electrical codes.

4. There is no limit on the number of solar modules or arrays installed on each property except for the following:
 - a.) Solar energy commercial operations are prohibited.

Schmidt said he was fine with the language and the recommendations from the Medina County Planning Services. He also mentioned that the ZC held a seminar on this topic and invited other townships to attend. Local Experts ran the seminar and offered information on the use and placement of solar panels.

Likley said that the staff comments from the MCPS confirmed with the solar experts that 8" was appropriate for flush mount structures rather than movable panels.

Thombs mentioned that the existing zoning code prohibited solar operations for commercial use and it is time to encourage solar energy. There are huge parcels of land in Westfield Township that could house Solar Farms that would be environmentally friendly. Also, if a resident has a surplus of energy produced it would be commercial if it was sold back to the grid. If we add commercial to the language then we could avoid a variance.

Schmidt said currently the Electric Company does not buy from residents.

Likley said that the size of panels for general use would have a net amount of energy. If there was a solar farm (designed for commercial use) then it could be a conditional use and a site plan review would be necessary. The zoning as written allows all districts to have solar panels for an accessory use; ex: Waste Treatment Plant could have panels for their facility.

Thombs restated that the way the zoning code is written the township would not permit any commercial solar farms.

Likley said commercial solar farms could be a conditional use in a Rural Residential district under Article 303- Section 2- Conditional use. The solar energy farms would then have parameters set after a site plan review.

Thombs said he agrees with the 8" for the varied roof pitches and they could be set for any angle to catch the sun and not go above the roof line.

Likley saw some concerns with flat roofs (such as the Waste Treatment Center) that the panels would exceed 8" or they would have to go with the ground mounted panels.

Schmidt mentioned that flat roofs need to be refinished about every 3 years so the panels would have to be removable.

Likley said that all zoning should not impact the value of a neighbor's property.

Thombs said that the trustees should set standards so solar panels can't be self-made; must be approved by one of the three organizations that make solar panels; allow commercial solar farms, not

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limit to 8" if there is a better recommendation by a manufacturing company; meet building, plumbing and electrical code requirements.

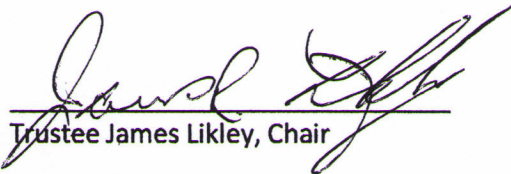
Likley would like for the language to include availability to flat roof structures and commercial conditional use to be part of the language. Likley suggested to the trustees that they continue this meeting and that each participant write language with their amended suggestions.

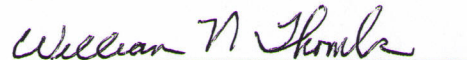
Likley closed this meeting at 6:30 PM and a continuation of this Public Hearing will be heard on September 15, 2014 at 5:30.

Respectfully Submitted by,

Cheryl Porter, Zoning Secretary

Date Approved: 9-2-2014


Trustee James Likley, Chair


Trustee William Thombs


Trustee Michael Schmidt