

**Jefferson County Local Development Corporation  
Alternative Energy Committee Meeting Minutes  
July 21, 2021**

The JCLDC held an alternative energy committee meeting on Wednesday, July 21, 2021 in the board room, 800 Starbuck Avenue, Watertown, NY.

**Present:** William Johnson, Chair; Paul Warneck, John Jennings

**Excused:** None, **Absent:** None

**Also Present:** David Converse, Lexi Bruening from Channel 7

**Zoom:** Rob Aliasso, Justin Miller, Esq.

**Staff Present:** David Zembiec, Marshall Weir, Peggy Sampson, Jay Matteson

- I. **Call to Order:** Mr. Johnson called the meeting to order at 8:30 a.m.
- II. **Review project tracking sheet** – The committee reviewed the current spreadsheet of solar projects in the County. It was noted that some of the projects that have been completed are not IDA projects that we have simply been tracking. A few minor changes were made . remove Geronimo since that project was acquired by AES, and remove EDF Renewables since it was listed twice. Mr. Johnson said that Mr. Zembiec should reach out to Jerry Haenlin to inquire about NRStor and to ask for updates on other projects as well.

Mr. Zembiec noted that the Borrego projects listed are new and that he spoke with them recently.

- III. **Review project cost page for PILOT application** – The committee reviewed the proposed Solar Project Costs page that will be added to the IDA application. They agreed to add a line for battery storage costs.

Mr. Jennings asked if we need to add a line for an appraisal cost. Mr. Warneck said that he would prefer that the appraiser works for us, then we can add the cost to the project. It was noted that the line does not need to be added to the solar project costs page. Attorney Miller said that all project costs should be broken out by category because it will be easier to identify if they are applicable for sales tax exemption.

Mr. Warneck asked how we will know who the actual applicant will be since some of the projects are sold before closing and/or post-closing. Attorney Miller said that the applicant will have to seek IDA's written permission for an assignment provision. He also said that we can require an ownership chart that needs to be updated throughout the process up until closing. Committee members agreed that the requirement should be added to the IDA application. Attorney Miller noted that this way it sets the tone early and helps us keep track since we will need the information for our annual reporting.

Mr. Warneck asked if we can ask for the actual generation output. Attorney Miller said that we can have an annual certification form for it.

- IV. **Discuss approach to utility scale projects** – Mr. Warneck asked if applicants are notified of the County's policy. Mr. Zembiec said yes. Mr. Johnson suggested that Mr. Zembiec talk with county officials about upcoming projects. Mr. Warneck said that they can also discuss the current policy. Mr. Zembiec said that he will reach out to Bob Hagemann.

Mr. Aliasso left the meeting at 9:25 a.m.

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- V. Discuss host community agreements** – Mr. Zembiec said that he will have Attorney Miller review a draft response letter addressed to Jim Burrows.

Mr. Warneck said that all affected taxing jurisdictions (ATJs) should be involved in negotiations. Attorney Miller said there are two ways to look at it. 1) The Town imposes a Host Community Agreement (HCA) up front which will not affect the PILOT and/or put pressure on it or 2) The Town will require a payment with an escalator (PILOT revenue expectation). Mr. Johnson asked if having an HCA makes it a deviation. Attorney Miller said no. Mr. Warneck said that he is ok with an HCA if all the ATJs agree to it; but not when they aren't all aware.

Attorney Miller noted that some IDAs charge an annual maintenance (administrative) fee of \$1,000 that they invoice and send out with the annual project verification requests. It was suggested that we could look into doing this as well and send a letter to all municipalities that we would like to explore the upfront HCA payment and try to implement it.

- VI. Other/Unfinished business** –

**Ag Land** – Mr. Johnson asked who should take on this issue. Mr. Warneck asked if we want to work with the County Planning Board. Mr. Zembiec said that we use the local planning board. Mr. Warneck pointed out that leases are in place before we know about any new projects. Attorney Miller said that we can incentivize or disincentivize.

Mr. Matteson said that the Ag Farmland Protection Board has already expressed their concern. He noted that farms are signing their land up with Ag & Markets, but said that it does not put it in any preservation. He said that they can also apply for an assessment (based on soil types). He said that a lot of the projects are in certified ag districts. He noted that approximately 7,000 acres of ag land is of concern in our county.

Mr. Matteson said that he will run a test on the property near the airport as requested using the model. He asked what else the committee will need from him. Mr. Warneck said that he should continue to talk with Ag & Markets.

Mr. Zembiec said that the disincentive model is to influence the developer, not the property owner. Mr. Matteson said that there is no bearing (when in ag district) unless there is something else discouraging them (i.e., disincentive model). He said it is the only thing we can do, but he is not sure it will work. Mr. Warneck said that we should ask county officials if they want us to disincentivize. Mr. Matteson said that he will continue to work with Doug Shelmidine, who chairs the Farmland Protection board.

**Map** – Mr. Johnson said that he previously asked to see a map that shows the project sites. Mr. Weir said that he will coordinate the request with the county.

- VII. Adjournment:** With no further business before the committee, a motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Mr. Jennings, seconded by Mr. Converse. The meeting adjourned at 10:31 a.m.