



TOWN OF ELLINGTON

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**ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 14, 2018, 7:00 PM
TOWN HALL ANNEX, 57 MAIN STREET, ELLINGTON, CT**

PRESENT: Chairman Sean Kelly, Vice Chairman Chris Todd, Regular Members Donna Resutek and David Hurley, and Alternates Stefanie Cunningham and Sulakshana Thanvanthri

ABSENT: None

STAFF

PRESENT: Lisa M. Houlihan, Town Planner and Samantha Getchell, Recording Clerk

I. **CALL TO ORDER:** Chairman Sean Kelly called the Economic Development Commission meeting to order at 7:01 PM in the Ellington Town Hall Annex, 57 Main Street, Ellington, CT.

II. **PUBLIC COMMENTS** (on non-agenda items): None.

III. **ACTIVE BUSINESS:**

1. Presentation: John Soininen, Project Development Manager, Lendlease Energy Development, LLC, potential Class 1 Renewable Energy Project (solar), Ellington Airport.

John Soininen from Lendlease Energy Development presented to the commission. He reported the history of the company and explained that LendLease is well-established in energy, construction management, property development, and telecommunications. There are 14 employees at Lendlease solely working on renewable energy.

LendLease would like to lease 75 acres of land at Ellington Airport for a utility-scale solar energy project. The design presented for review is preliminary. Mr. Soininen is present to review the project and seek commission support. The project requires financing and Lendlease would like to discuss a tax agreement setting the taxes at a reasonable, consistent rate versus a depreciating schedule. He referred to a project recently approved in Wallingford for Lendlease and noted that a tax agreement is part of the approval.

Vice Chairman Todd asked how the project would affect operation of the airport. Mr. Soininen won't have a definite answer until further design is conducted, but stated it's the company's intent not to affect any of the operations at the airport. Vice Chairman Todd wondered how the project would affect the tree line along the west side of the airport. Mr. Soininen confirmed the company would analyze this during further design stages, but they would like to leave the tree line intact. Commissioner Todd asked if sound studies have

been conducted for solar projects near airports. Mr. Soininen did not think there will be an increase in sound from the project at the airport.

Chairman Kelly asked how the project will increase tax revenues for Ellington. Mr. Soininen explained the anticipated increase in taxes from the project. He confirmed that long-term employment will likely be limited to maintenance jobs.

In response to Chairman Kelly, Mr. Soininen explained renewable energy credits.

Chairman Kelly asked what the efficiency of the product is after 25 years. The production of panels degrade about half a percent a year, but can function up to 35 years with proper service. Lendlease looks for projects they can engage in for up to 50 years.

Vice Chairman Todd asked if studies are present explaining impacts on residential areas near large solar sites. Mr. Soininen reported there is zero direct impact on properties in the vicinity of solar sites.

Commissioner Resuttek wondered if the panels create glare. Mr. Soininen confirmed that panels are designed to capture as much sunlight as possible. If the project advances, a glare analysis will be conducted and Federal Aviation Administration sign-off is required.

Ms. Houlihan asked why Lendlease is looking at Connecticut for large solar projects. Mr. Soininen explained state goals to increase clean energy and recent statutes allowing tax agreements. Leadlease is looking for more ways to invest in clean energy markets.

Ellington has zoning regulations for solar farms and include a 50 foot setback and screening provisions. Lendlease will honor the town's regulations. Jurisdiction for utility-scale projects is solely with the Connecticut Siting Council, local oversight is advisory only.

The Ellington Airport Feasibility study was mentioned. The Study contemplated Town ownership, but was not pursued finding no economic benefit and anticipated increase in costs for maintenance and operations. The property has been listed for sale for many years. The solar project may help sustain current onsite activities. Chairman Kelly confirmed from an economic development standpoint the idea sounds good, but he is not sure if the Town will support the project.

Mr. Soininen confirmed there will be a perimeter fence around the area. Commissioner Resuttek questioned if the project creates an electromagnetic field (EMF) from the large battery used to regulate output. Mr. Soininen confirmed there will not be an EMF.

Mr. Soininen confirmed the company is open to conversation about attractive landscaping around the project space. He'll provide copies of relevant State statutes. Mr. Soininen is available to answers questions going forward. He will provide additional details about the project based on discussion with the commission.

By consensus, the Commission agreed to continue discussion next month.

2. Report: Tolland County Chamber of Commerce
BY CONSENSUS, DISCUSSION WAS TABLED.
3. Report: Agricultural Initiatives
 - a. Oakridge Dairy Farmland Preservation Application Configuration Agreement & Map.

Ms. Houlihan reported the configuration proposal is the first official stage of the farmland preservation application. She referred to page 3 of the configuration which details how the land is proposed to be split into three farms. Oakridge Dairy accepted the configuration and the State will proceed with formal appraisals.

4. Report: Business Directory/Business Surveys and Site Visits
 - a. GoLocal – Ellington, CT Audience Review – October 2018 Report
BY CONSENSUS, DISCUSSION WAS TABLED.
5. Report: Sustainable Ellington
 - a. 1.3 - Inventory and Promote Local Retail Options
 - b. 1.4 - Provide Resources and Supports to Local Businesses
 - c. 1.5 - Promote Sustainable Workforce Development
BY CONSENSUS, DISCUSSION WAS TABLED.
6. Report: Tax Incentive/Abatement Programs
There was nothing to report, at this time.
7. Report: Current Economic Activity

Ms. Houlihan reported that a permit was issued for a consignment shop (Ellington Fine Consignments) in the commercial building behind Kloter Farms on Main Street. She explained there is an application pending for a veterinarian office at 106 West Road and expects it will be approved by the Planning and Zoning Commission.

IV. ADMINISTRATIVE BUSINESS:

1. Approval of the October 10, 2018 regular meeting minutes
MOVED (RESUTEK) SECONDED (TODD) AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY TO APPROVE THE OCTOBER 10, 2018 MEETING MINUTES AS WRITTEN.
2. Approval of the 2019 Meeting Schedule
MOVED (TODD) SECONDED (HURLEY) AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY TO APPROVE THE 2019 MEETING SCHEDULE AS WRITTEN.
3. Correspondence:
 - a. Ellington Market Analysis 2018
 - b. Ellington Airport 2010 Report - Executive Summary
 - c. Oakridge Times – October 15, 2018
 - d. Memo dated October 15, 2018 from First Selectman's Office in reference to FY2019-2020 Capital Improvements Budget Requests

V. ADJOURNMENT:

MOVED (HURLEY) SECONDED (TODD) AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY TO ADJOURN THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION MEETING AT 8:58 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Samantha Getchell, Recording Clerk