

Minutes of Called Meeting
Elbert County Board of Commissioners
February 12, 2024

Chairman Lee Vaughn called the meeting to order. Present were Commissioner David Hunt, Commissioner Casey Freeman, Commissioner Chris Alexander, Commissioner Mike Scoggins, Commissioner Freddie Jones, County Administrator Allen Hulme, CFO Macie Witcher, County Attorney Bill Daughtry, County Clerk Tamara Butler and media.

After the pledge to the United States flag, the invocation was given by Mr. Daughtry

Chairman Vaughn stated there was a request from Hester Hill Solar to delay consideration of their Conditional Use application until the March meeting; the meeting tonight is to discuss whether to delay it or not. This will be the only item on the agenda; then we will start our public hearing and meeting.

Adoption of the Agenda. Chairman Vaughn asked for a motion to amend the agenda to add public comments at the beginning of the meeting. Commissioner Alexander made the motion to adopt the agenda as amended. Commissioner Hunt seconded the motion. The motion passed 5-0.

Public Comments. Monica Schmelzenbach, representative for NextEra Energy asked for the deferral in order to have more opportunities to engage the community on concerns addressed in the last several weeks, through public events and educational opportunities. They want to continue community engagement efforts and address setbacks with visual simulations and implemented wildlife fencing. They believe the 30-day deferral request would grant them the opportunity.

Susan Fernandez a resident of Lincolnton Hwy, stated the Commissioners do not need to delay this any longer; the only answer should be no, since Planning and Zoning voted against the zoning change. She has noticed that they have continued to do work and surveying as if they are going to be approved. She stated the residents that live in that area do not want it. She asked to please not approve their request.

Mr. Daughtry stated that Commissioner Casey Freeman owns an interest in property that is contiguous (adjoining property that is separated only by a road) to the project proposed by Hester Hill Solar and their application. Mr. Freeman has a serious potential conflict of interest in this case and will not be voting on the rezone application or taking any other action to influence the outcome of the application. He is allowed to speak on the issue, but if he speaks at the public hearing or meeting, he will be doing so as a private citizen and not as a member of the Board of Commissioners.

Discussion and consideration to postpone the Public Hearing for Hester Hill Solar's Conditional Use application until the March 11, 2024 meeting agenda. Commissioner Scoggins made a motion to deny Hester Hill Solar's request to delay their application. Commissioner Hunt seconded the motion. The motion passed 4-0, with Commissioner Freeman abstaining.

Adjournment. Commissioner Alexander made a motion to adjourn. Commissioner Hunt seconded the motion. The motion passed 5-0.