

AT A REGULAR MEETING OF THE PLANNING
COMMISSION HELD IN AND FOR GADSDEN COUNTY, FL
ON AUGUST 12, 2021 AT 6:00P.M., THE FOLLOWING
PROCEEDING WAS HAD, VIZ:

Present: Dr. Joe Parramore, Chair, District 5-Absent
Lori Bouie, Vice-Chair, District 5
Eugene Sherman III, District 1
William Chukes, District 1
John Youmans, District 2
Tracey Stallworth, District 2-Absent
Frances Brown, District 3-Absent
Wayne Williams, District 3-Absent
Charles Hayes, District 4
Anthony Powell, District 4
Charles Roberts, At Large
Karema Dudley, School Board Representative

Staff Present: Clayton Knowles, County Attorney
Diane Quigley, Growth Management Director
Jill Jeglie, Principal Planner
Marcella Blocker, Deputy Clerk
Sara Green, Clerk's Office

Due to the restrictions on gatherings as a result of the COVID-19 virus, this meeting and public hearings may be viewed by accessing the Gadsden County Board of County Commissioners Facebook Page, www.facebook.com/GadsdenCountyBOCC.

Those wishing to provide public testimony for the meeting and public hearings will be able to do so by accessing the Zoom platform, with virtual meeting access details that will be posted to the Gadsden County website, www.gadsdencountyfl.gov. Anyone wishing to speak on agenda items should schedule or notify the County Public Information Officer at 850-875-8671 or emailing media@gadsdencountyfl.gov at least 3 hours before attending the meeting and will be asked to follow the Gadsden County Public Meetings Citizens Access Guidelines. Public comment for the meeting and public hearings should be submitted via email to CitizensToBeHeard@gadsdencountyfl.gov until noon on the day of the meeting in order to allow sufficient time for provision to the Planning Commission prior to the meeting and public hearings. Any comments submitted after this time will be accepted and included as part of the official record of the meeting.

1. CALL TO ORDER

Vice Chair Bouie called the meeting to order at 6:03 PM.

2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Vice Chair Bouie led in the Pledge of Allegiance to the U.S. flag.

3. INTRODUCTION OF MEMBERS – ROLL CALL

Deputy Clerk Marcella Blocker called roll. The following commissioners in attendance were Vice Chair Bouie, William Chukes, Eugene Sherman III, John Youmans, Charles Hayes, Anthony Powell, Charles Roberts, and Karema Dudley.

4. Approval of Minutes

Vice Chair Bouie requested a change to the minutes as they showed her being absent when she was present. Also, the minutes showed Cathy Johnson as the school board member and her replacement is Karema Dudley.

COMMISSIONER SHERMAN MADE A MOTION TO APPROVE WITH CORRECTIONS AND COMMISSIONER YOUMANS MADE THE SECOND. THE BOARD VOTED 8-0 BY VOICE VOTE TO APPROVE.

5. DISCLOSURES AND DECLARATIONS OF CONFLICTS

There were no disclosures or declarations of conflict by the commissioners at this time.

PUBLIC HEARINGS

7. Wild Azalea (FPL) Solar Energy Center Conceptual/preliminary Site Plan (Quasi-Judicial Hearing (SP 2021-04)-Consideration of a conceptual/preliminary site plan to construct a solar power generation facility on 1,102.36± acres located on and accessing Atwater Road south of Blue Start Highway (US 90) and north of the railroad line.

Jill Jeglie, AICP, Senior Planner, sworn in by the Deputy Clerk and gave a brief description of the agenda item. She stated that this is a public hearing for the development of eight (8) parcels totaling 1,102.35± acres with a solar power generation facility (SPGF) (solar photovoltaic system) to generate electricity. Florida Power and Light will be the primary user of the generated electricity. SPGFs are permitted in the Agriculture 2 and Agriculture 3 future land use categories subject to Board approval as a Class II, Type II site plan review as a quasi-judicial action per Subsection 1304 of the LDC. The site location will be on both sides of Atwater Road, south of Blue Star Highway (US 90). The current land use is Timber II and the applicant's agency has indicated that there will be no daily traffic impacts.

The application has indicated compliance with the required setbacks with a minimum 50' setback from any property line, a minimum 100' from the right-of-way, and a minimum 50' from any jurisdictional wetland. Buffers are not required in this case. The wetland areas are to be preserved and a 50' wide natural buffer to maintained adjacent to wetland area.

An open house was held on April 12 and April 13th, 2021 to "introduce the project to the neighbors, discuss how solar energy centers operate and give neighbors opportunity to ask questions and discuss concerns with FRP staff".

Ms. Jeglie states the planning commission recommends option one, approval of the Wild Azalea Solar Energy Center Conceptual/Preliminary Site Plan (AP-2021-04) approving the applicant's request to install above ground DC cable interconnections and the gen-tie line between the proposed substation and the existing transmission line to the southwest with conditions.

Alara Mills Gutcher, 2311 Lee Street Lynn Haven, FL., certified land use planner who is working alongside FPL was sworn in by Deputy Clerk Marcella Blocker. Ms. Gutcher describes the efforts FPL has gone through regarding regulations and meeting with the surrounding community around the proposed site through meetings with county staff as well as open

house events for the community where they addressed questions and concerns regarding the proposed solar farm.

Amy Goodwin, 700 Universe Boulevard in Juno Beach, FL, was sworn in by Deputy Clerk Marcella Blocker. Ms. Goodwin is the project director of development for the Wild Azalea project. Once sworn in, Ms. Goodwin began her presentation detailing the clean, reliable, and affordable energy that is produced by FPL from these solar projects and that the clean energy has saved FPL customers in fuel costs. She goes on to state FPL has 42 solar energy centers in 22 Florida counties which account for 65% of solar energy in Florida. Ms. Goodwin states the Wild Azalea project will bring in jobs and produce higher tax revenues for the county, between five and seven million dollars. She stated there will be no night time lighting created from the project and no additional traffic will be made as the project is remotely operated. She goes on to say FPL employs Florida based talent when possible.

Ms. Goodwin closed the presentation and opened the floor for questions.

Commissioner Roberts asked who the customer is to which Ms. Goodwin said FPL and its customers. At this time Vice Chair Bouie addressed two letters that were sent in.

Vice Chair Bouie read the first letter from James Graven aloud and stated the other portion of the letter was illegible but signed by 26 persons. Mr. Graven's letter was as follows:

"Ladies and Gentlemen of the Gadsden Planning Committee,

First, I am fully in support of solar power and green energies and am delighted to see that Gadsden County is supportive of such technologies.

However, after reviewing the proposed Wild Azalea Preliminary Site Plan, I do have one concern that we ask you to seriously consider. My wife and I chose this area of Gadsden County several years ago to build our home and raise our children, feeling that it was a safe and desirable location for our children to grow and thrive. However, the current plan for the Wild Azalea solar farm shows a "proposed substation" close to the western border of the thousand plus acre farm. This is within a few hundred feet of the property borders of the residents of Mt. Pleasant Cemetery Road, including our property. As parents to young children and with my wife and I both being healthcare professionals, we are very concerned about the health effects associated with the electromagnetic radiation that the substation will produce.

We are asking that the substation be relocated to a central area within the thousand plus acre tract. We feel this would be safe for the health of the residents of Atwater Road and safer for those of Mt. Pleasant Cemetery Road.

We request that you consider a motion that would amend the preliminary site plan to move the substation to the middle of the

solar farm. This would ensure a safe distance for all Gadsden residents between residential areas and the substation.

Thank you for conserving this request.

James and Lucinda Graven”

Vice Chair Bouie then read the following excerpt from the next letter which was from David Avant III.:

“I David Avant & my neighbors are opposed to the Farm because it is not comparable.

- 1) It will eliminate valuable crops & Timberland which produce many more jobs over the term of the solar farm.
- 2) It turns a rural farming area into a industrial eyesore.
- 3) It takes land which can be farmed, timbered built on out of the process for 30 or more years.
- 4) Jobs created will be short lived & mostly out of county.
- 5) What will happen after the solar farm wears out? Development more industry?
- 6) Its not zoned for it.
- 7) The local residents don’t want the traffic & noise of construction for 2 or 3 years.
- 8) The electricity wont be cheaper or even used in Gadsden County exclusively!
- 9) It hasn’t had a full archeological survey of the proposed site or a natural features flora and fauna inventory.
- 10) It sits beside a historical farm the oldest in Gadsden Co. on the national register which operates as a hunting preserve that will greatly impacted by the loss of travel & food.

Also, they have no easement to get to the substation & transmission line the 3 familys which own this land over 200 years will not sell or grant a easement. And will defend our soverign rights.

David”

Vice Chair Bouie then opened the floor for questions.

Commissioner Sherman applauded FPL for reaching out to community. He was curious about the attendees to the open house. He states that while he supports the idea, he has the following concerns: is the proposed project on a historical site? If there are 26± signatures on the letter, how many of them were in attendance to the open house? Easement access is a big question, appears access would be there? As for the expected life span of the farm, 30 years, what is involved with restoration?

Ms. Goodwin began addressing Commissioner Sherman’s questions. There is a historical site, 1600 feet southwest of the Joshua David house which has a National Register number of 8GD115. Separated from the project by Highway 90, 1000 feet of a pine tree farm, and

wetland system. Solar farm should not be visible from the Joshua David house. Two cultural research surveys were done by Search, Inc. and Terracon, Inc. conducted reports regarding Florida statutes and archeological sites. Three sites were discovered, two being described as “sparse lithic scatters” and the other site was recommended for avoidance due to age of the site.

Ms. Goodwin proceeds to address who was at the open house and whether they were on the letter Vice Chair Bouie read or not. She said Mr. Avant, along with others who signed the letter, was at the open house and her colleagues discussed their concerns with them.

Regarding the easements, Ms. Goodwin stated FPL is in communication with the landowners to reach a mutual agreeable and voluntary outcome through compensation.

Ms. Goodwin answered Commissioner Sherman’s questions about restoration, she said the process is called “Sunsetting”. FPL will remove all the infrastructure if there is no longer a demand for the site. The aluminum and glass are recycled and FPL will work with UF to recycle these items. All the holes left over will be filled back in with the appropriate soil.

Commissioner Powell asked if there was an issue with moving the substation to the center of the project rather than where it is proposed to sit currently due to the risk of electromagnetic fields expressed in Mr. Gravens’ letter.

Ms. Goodwin addressed Commissioner Powell’s question and said because of the land, the substation could not be moved to the center as the current proposed location is the flattest. The substation is located .2 miles from the closest property line and the EMF’s pose no threat.

Commissioner Youmans asked if there was discussion about the substation and EMF at the open house to which Ms. Goodwin responded yes.

Commissioner Roberts, which communities will benefit and receive the power generated from the solar project?

Ms. Goodwin responds FPL is building the project for their customers and while she cannot tell the commissioner who specifically will be getting the electrons generated, she can tell them the solar electrons go to where they are needed, whether the need load is in Quincy or Atlanta.

Commissioner Chukes asked if there is a better site for the project that was further away from communities.

Ms. Goodwin responded it varied based on disturbed agricultural land and wetland features and they did not see any other parcels for sale at the time.

Vice Chair Bouie questioned how Gadsden County can benefit from the solar project aside from the five to seven million dollars tax revenue over the 30-year life span of the farm.

Ms. Goodwin states FPL’s human resources will conduct job fairs so locals can work at the site or make a career.

Commissioner Sherman asked why FPL chose Gadsden County?

Ms. Goodwin states FPL’s best interest is to diversify where they put sites and along with the good weather, Gadsden County has the best existing land.

Chair Bouie will consider recommendations, particularly option one. Hearing no other questions from the board or public she moves forward with a vote.

A MOTION WAS MADE BY COMMISSIONER HAYES AND SECOND BY COMMISSIONER POWELL. THE MOTION PASSED 7-1 WITH A ROLL CALL VOTE AS FOLLOWS:

Lori Bouie Yes

Eugene Sherman III	No
William Chukes	Yes
John Youmans	Yes
Charles Hayes	Yes
Anthony Powell	Yes
Charles Roberts	Yes
Karema Dudley	Yes

COMMISSIONER ROBERTS MOTIONED FOR A BRIEF RECESS WITH COMMISSIONER CHUKES SECONDING. THE MOTION PASSED 8-0.

6. Gadsden County Solar (Florida Renewable Partners) Conceptual/Preliminary Site Plan (Quasi-Judicial) (SP 2021-03)-Consideration of a conceptual/preliminary site plan to construct a solar power generation facility on 787.55± acres located east of Atwater Road, south of the railroad line and north of Willian L. Martin Road

Vice Chair Bouie called the meeting back to order at 7:29 P.M.

Jill Jeglie, AICP, Senior Planner, still under oath gave a description of agenda item. She stated that this is a public hearing for the development of five (5) parcels combined to the total 787.55± acres with a solar power generation facility (SPGF) (solar photovoltaic system) to generate electricity. Seminole Electric Cooperative will generate electricity and transfer it on Duke Transmission Lines. SPGFs are permitted in the Agriculture 2 and Agriculture 3 future land use categories subject to Board approval as a Class II, Type II site plan review as a quasi-judicial action per Subsection 1304 of the LDC. The property will be located on the east side of Atwater Road, south of Blue Star Highway (US 90) and north of William L Martin Road. There will be no daily traffic impacts. Therefore, the concurrency will not be reduced and the Level of Service (LOS) will not be impacted. For setbacks, the application for the project has indicated a minimum 50' (fifty) feet setback from any property line, a minimum 100' (one hundred) feet from the right-of-way, and a minimum 50' (fifty) feet from any jurisdictional wetland (natural area buffer). An indicated height of the ground mounted facilities, specifically the photovoltaic panels, will not exceed 15' in height. Other substation structures will comply with the height for principal structures which is 75'. The proposed SPGF is not located adjacent to property designated as Rural Residential, in a platted residential subdivision or adjacent to a collector or arterial roadway, therefore, a one-hundred-foot (100') buffer wide opaque buffer is not required. The perimeter fence shall be 6'-0" tall chain link with three (3) strands of barbed wire to make an overall height of 7'-0". The substation fence shall be a 7'-0" tall chain link fence with six (6) strands of barbed wire on "V" extension arms to make an overall height of 8'0" or it will be of woven wire fence with an overall height of six (6') feet. The applicant has requested approval to install the DC cable interconnections above ground using industry accepted methods. The gen-tie line will be above ground between the proposed Gadsden substation and the existing Duke substation.

Jill Jeglie states the planning department recommends option one; approve the Gadsden County Solar Conceptual/Preliminary Site Plan (SP-2021-03) approving the applicant's request to install above ground DC cable interconnections between solar arrays and the gen-tie line between the proposed substation and the existing substation with conditions.

Alara Mills Gutcher comes before the Board to attest that all requirements have been met or exceeds. She introduces the project manager next.

Mike Lienhard, 700 Universe Boulevard, Juno Beach, FL, is sworn in by Deputy Clerk Marcella Blocker before he begins his presentation.

Mr. Lienhard explains the project will bring the county between 5 (five) to 7 (seven) million dollars in tax revenue during the 30± year life span of the farm.

Mr. Lienhard states Florida Renewable Partners (FRP) held an open house in April to address any concerns citizens in the surrounding area may have and sent letters to ±90 neighbors. He opens the floor to questions.

Commissioner Roberts had questions; is Talquin part of the cooperative that will be benefitting from the energy made? Mr. Lienhard answers yes. Commissioner Youmans asked if there were any oppositions at the open house. Mr. Lienhard said no.

Commissioner Sherman had a question regarding training opportunities for local residents and maintenance skills for the 30 years. What type of taxes are creating the revenue?

Mr. Lienhard responds that property taxes will be generated and that FRP will be happy to work with the community to provide training as well.

Chair Bouie had questions. She said some companies were using the land with a sunset plan then asked if is there a beautification/restoration plan for after the use? She also asked if there were any plans for a working relationship with the schoolboard so training programs for the youth could be established.

Mr. Lienhard states his staff can come up with agreed upon language regarding this.

Diane Quigley, Growth Management Director, states the decommission plan after is to put the wetlands in conservation easements and to ensure they are retained.

Commissioner Sherman states he would like to do option 3, discretion of the Planning Commission, with a more formal plan with the schoolboard for training and special skills.

A MOTION WAS MADE BY COMMISSIONER SHERMAN AND SECOND BY COMMISSIONER ROBERTS. THE MOTION PASSED 8-0 WITH A ROLL CALL VOTE AS FOLLOWS:

Lori Bouie	Yes
Eugene Sherman III	Yes
William Chukes	Yes
John Youmans	Yes
Charles Hayes	Yes
Anthony Powell	Yes
Charles Roberts	Yes
Karema Dudley	Yes

8. Private Property Rights Element (Legislative) (CPA 2021-01)-Consideration of Adoption of Ordinance 2021-006 to adopt a Private Property Rights Element as a new element in the Gadsden County Comprehensive Plan.

Vice Chair Bouie introduced the item.

Diane Quigley gave an overview of the agenda item. She states this is a public hearing for consideration of adoption of ordinance 2021-006. House Bill 59 was recently signed into law to amend Chapter 163.3177 Florida Statutes adding subsection (6)(i) the requirement for each local government to adopt a Property Rights Element into their Comprehensive Plan. Ms. Quigley states the staff gives recommendation of option 1.

Commissioner Hayes asks if this applies to all governments in Florida. Ms. Quigley responds yes, all 67 counties in Florida have to address it.

Vice Chair Bouie asks for clarification regarding attachment that references employees at the residential dwelling and asks if that’s something Gadsden County is inputting into their plan or just the state. Ms. Quigley responds that her office goes through and determines which applies to their comprehensive plans to reflect the new laws.

A MOTION WAS MADE BY COMMISSIONER YOUMAN AND SECOND BY COMMISSIONER CHUKES. THE MOTION PASSED 8-0 WITH A ROLL CALL VOTE AS FOLLOWS:

Lori Bouie	Yes
Eugene Sherman III	Yes
William Chukes	Yes
John Youmans	Yes
Charles Hayes	Yes
Anthony Powell	Yes
Charles Roberts	Yes
Karema Dudley	Yes

GENERAL BUSINESS

9. NEW BUSINESS

Commissioner Roberts said he’s noticed several large national and international companies coming to Gadsden County. He suggests the board come up with a standard that a certain percentage of revenue generated from projects comes from county population so tax dollars and dollars generated within the county stay in the county.

Commissioner Sherman states he doesn’t think it’s the responsibility of the board to discuss subcontracting but rather the Board of County Commissioners’. He explains he thinks there’s something that solar companies are seeing with Gadsden County and that the county and planning board needs to be ahead of the curve with training the youth and adults in these fields. Skillsets aren’t just for solar but for the future as well. Benefit from the solar industry’s interest.

Commissioner Roberts brings up how he travels a lot and through that and his retired friends on school boards throughout the country, he understands the importance of STEM programs and counties benefiting from them. He states he fears the companies coming into the county will continue to make money while Gadsden County doesn’t benefit from them. He believes a long-term benefit would be a STEM program. He wants the county to get the most bang from its buck and says to do that we have to start with the school system and branch out.

Ms. Quigley suggested the “carrot or the stick approach” as to not turn off potential companies due to many requests or requirements.

County Attorney Clayton Knowles suggests adding these requirements as amendments to the land amendment code.

Commissioner Chukes expresses concern over lack of workshops with planning commission. Mr. Knowles lets the Board know workshops are doable and suggests going through the land development code to revise with points the Board suggested. He states workshops are good because there isn’t any voting.

10. DIRECTOR’S/PLANNER COMMENTS

Ms. Quigley announced Jill’s retirement.

Vice Chair Bouie formally thanked Jill.

A MOTION WAS MADE BY COMMISSIONER POWELL AND SECOND BY COMMISSIONER DUDLEY. THE MOTION PASSED 8-0.

11. Next Meeting

September 16, 2021

12. ADJOURNMENT OF MEETING

THERE BEING NO FURTHER BUSINESS TO COME BEFORE THE BOARD, VICE CHAIR BOUIE DECLARED THE MEETING ADJOURNED AT 8:30 P.M.

GADSDEN COUNTY, FLORIDA

DR. JOE PARRAMORE, Chair
Planning Commission

ATTEST:

NICHOLAS THOMAS, Clerk