

At a special called meeting of the Charlotte County Board of Supervisors held at the Randolph-Henry High School Auditorium on June 1, 2022, at 5:00 p.m.

Present: Gary D. Walker-Chairman
Will Garnett-Vice Chairman
Garland H. Hamlett, Jr.
Robert L. Shook, Jr.
Hazel Bowman Smith
Tony Reeves
Walter T. Bailey

Absent:

Chairman Walker called the meeting to order.

County Administrator Daniel Witt read the Code of Accessibility.

Supervisor Reeves gave the invocation.

Chairman Walker lead the Pledge of Allegiance.

Motion was made by Supervisor Bailey, seconded by Supervisor Reeves, and carried with all other members present and voting yes to approve the agenda as presented.

Chairman Walker recessed the Board of Supervisors meeting and opened the Public Hearing for the Randolph Solar Project.

Francis Hodsoll, CEO from Solunesco, approached the Board and introduced himself and members of Dominion. He stated that Randolph Solar would be an 800-megawatt solar farm with 3,000 acres of equipment and 4,500 acres fenced in.

Mr. Hodsoll stated that Randolph Solar Project would bring millions of dollars in revenue to Charlotte County. Twenty million dollars would be given up front with 5 million dollars given every year to total 600 million over 50 years. Mr. Hodsoll also stated that 85% of land in the project would not contain solar equipment.

Mr. Hodsoll stated he wanted to point out this project had been a long process that Solunesco had been working on for 3 years, starting with an application submitted in June 2019. Solunesco had reached out to all citizens within 400-600 feet from the project's boundary lines.

Mr. Adam Thompson from Dominion addressed the Board and stated that Dominion intended to acquire Randolph Solar from Solunesco and the company is the 2nd largest operator of solar in the Country. He stated that a third party, funded by Dominion, would be hired to create permits and do inspections on the solar project. Mr. Thompson said that the County would be thoroughly

protected from financial crisis and obligation. He stated that Dominion planned to recycle solar panels or have them placed in landfills especially made for them. Mr. Thompson said Dominion would take responsibility for roadways during the project as well: i.e. dirt on the roads, potholes created, etc. He said that every 25 acres would have a stormwater basin, while DEQ required one up to 100 acres per basin. Mr. Thompson also stated that Dominion planned to meet with emergency services and provide training over the next few months and at regular intervals leading up to construction of the project. Mr. Thompson stated that Dominion had committed to hosting two open house events to give opportunities to all local companies, so they could be involved with the work on the Randolph Solar Project.

Mr. Michael Zehner from The Berkeley Group approached the Board to review the staff's recommendation regarding the Randolph Solar Project. He stated that the Berkeley Group does not recommend the approval of the Randolph Solar Project. Mr. Zehner read over the staff report provided to the County. The Berkeley Group did not think that the project is in compliance with the County's Comprehensive Plan, nor that it would bring permanent jobs to Charlotte County. Mr. Zehner stated that the project would last for 35-50 years, the County could not realistically plan for something that far out and would need additional County staff for the work the project requires. He wanted to note that they took into account the County's current land use policies and regulations and that the Board can take other things into consideration. Mr. Zehner did say that he recommended the written conditions if the Board approves the Randolph Solar Project. The conditions that were in addition to the Planning Commission's recommendation were as follows: Condition 1: 305 acres is increased to 450 acres, Condition 3: density of project should be limited to 9.10 percent within any given 5 mile radius, Condition 4: fence line increased to 4500 acres, Condition 41: The County Administrator could grant a one time extension to extend the CUP if there has been a circumstance out of anyone's control.

Public Comment Period:

Doug Garnett: Spoke in support of Randolph Solar

David Meadoly: Spoke in support of Randolph Solar

Rebecca Daily: Spoke in opposition to Randolph Solar

Joe Palmer: Spoke in support of Randolph Solar

Ronnie Howard: Spoke in support of Randolph Solar

Rodney Moon: Spoke in opposition to Randolph Solar

Emily Jackson: Spoke in support of Randolph Solar

Kay Peratoni: Spoke in opposition to Randolph Solar

Lane Gunn: Spoke in support of Randolph Solar

Bill Devin: Spoke in support of Randolph Solar

PK Pettus: Spoke in opposition to Randolph Solar

Donna Fore: Spoke in opposition to Randolph Solar

Skyler Zunk: Spoke in support of Randolph Solar

Curtis Morton: Spoke in support of Randolph Solar

Elizabeth Devin: Spoke in support of Randolph Solar

Blake Cox: Spoke in support of Randolph Solar

Brandon Estes: Spoke in opposition to Randolph Solar

Megan Devin Martinez: Spoke in support of Randolph Solar

Brick Goldman: Spoke in support of Randolph Solar

Stefan Barnes: Spoke in opposition to Randolph Solar

Barbara LaPradd: Spoke in opposition to Randolph Solar

Judy Brothers : Spoke in opposition to Randolph Solar

George Toombs: Spoke in opposition to Randolph Solar

Chairman Walker closed the Public Hearing and opened the Board of Supervisors meeting.

Chairman Walker stated that the letters and signatures mailed in have been reviewed and showed sixty seven in support and thirteen against the project.

Board Member Comments:

Supervisor Reeves asked how much of a problem is the potential for fire with solar panels, how the fire departments would access inside the fencing if there was a fire and who would be in charge of the forest management. Mr. Hodsoll replied that forest management and the access is in the conditions. Adam Thompson stated that Dominion will work with the fire departments directly regarding the access roads. Mr. Zehner then replied that there is a condition that says Solunesco will allow access for inspections, but recommended the Board also include a condition that would give access to areas that are actively managed.

Supervisor Smith asked why do we have to reserve the option to put panels on the Conservation Easements, to which Mr. Hodsoll replied it is a general standard included for flexibility. Mr. Thompson then stated that Dominion has in the conditions (Condition 1, Letter I) that no panels will be on the Conservation Easements. Mr. Zehner verified that was correct. Supervisor Smith then asked why there are 10,500 acres in panels reserved or 21,000 under the option to use, and

asked to explain how people will be compensated if land is not used. Mr. Hodsoll said Solunesco has made a commitment that any landowner with land in the project would be compensated and if said land is not used in the project, it would then be released from their contract. Supervisor Smith then asked Dominion how large a sediment pond has to be to service an acre of panels. Mr. Shawn Lowe from Dominion replied that it is hard to pin down an exact size but the goal is to minimize the footprint of the project as much as possible. Supervisor Smith asked if the ponds be in the fenced in area, to which Mr. Lowe replied yes.

Supervisor Bailey asked who would oversee maintaining the fence and who would oversee increasing the fenced in area. Mr. Hodsoll stated that things are done like that for flexibility in placing panels, only 10% of the fence might move. Supervisor Bailey asked if there is a map of where the panels would go. Mr. Hodsoll stated that the map is on the Solunesco site. Supervisor Bailey then asked how many acres would be disturbed at a time to which Mr. Hodsoll replied, they can only disrupt 500 acres of land at a time. Supervisor Bailey then asked when would Solunesco's trucks be on the road, would Solunesco adhere to the same laws as other transfer trucks? Mr. Hodsoll replied that they would be creating an equipment movement plan that would be approved by the County. Supervisor Bailey then asked if Solunesco had increased setbacks themselves, and Mr. Hodsoll replied that he had worked with certain landowners in their situations and increased setbacks for them.

Supervisor Shook asked Mr. Hodsoll why had the numbers continuously changed? Mr. Hodsoll stated that the project itself had changed since the beginning, ponds have changed, Dominion has their own rules and regulations that had to be accommodated. Mr. Hodsoll also said that Solunesco is preserving 6,000 acres that would remain untouched, the plan would be to disturb 4,500, plus, a 10% buffer for the project.

Supervisor Hamlett asked Dominion how they felt about HB 206, how would it effect Dominion and this project and what is Dominion's stance on the Bill. Mr. John Puvac, Dominion's Attorney, stated that nothing is pending for this year. Supervisor Hamlett asked if Dominion is concerned? Mr. Puvac said from an industry perspective, the Bill wasn't developed enough for them to be concerned. Mr. Zehner stated the Bill would not apply to this project. Mr. Thompson stated they were not concerned. Supervisor Hamlett then asked, where would the panels be decommissioned and what are the plans for that? Mr. Thompson said that there are landfill options in other states, none are in Virginia yet.

Chairman Walker then asked at what point would new regulations stop affecting the project? Mr. Thompson replied that there is no black and white answer and various factors play a roll in that, such as effective dates or point of completion of a project.

Chairman Walker stated that he had seen another solar project recently and appreciated the screening they used on the fencing while the natural buffering was growing. He then asked would screen fencing until the trees mature be acceptable. Mr. Hodsoll stated that there will be a Fencing Plan that the Board would have to approve.

Chairman Walker then asked County Administrator Witt what needed to be done in order to vote on the Randolph Solar project.

Administrator Witt suggested a Special Called Meeting at Randolph Henry High School and that it will not be able to be held in June, in order to be in compliance with the advertising laws. Mr. Witt stated that the Board should have a Special Called Meeting to discuss the Randolph Solar Project and said the financial piece needed to be considered by the Board. Witt suggested a closed session with the County Attorney, Solunesco and Dominion. Mr. Witt stated July 5th is the first date that the Board would be able hold the hearing. Chairman Walker directed County Administrator Witt to schedule the Public Hearing for the siting agreement and also a closed meeting.

Being no further business to discuss, the meeting was adjourned.

BY:

Daniel N. Witt, Clerk

ATTEST:

Gary D. Walker, Chairman