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Solar Energy Facilities Update



In recent months, the Jefferson County Planning Commission (JCPC) prepared a draft amendment of the [Envision Jefferson 2035 Comprehensive Plan](#) to include language permitting large scale solar facilities in the rural and residential growth districts. This amendment comes after several Jefferson County residents filed a lawsuit against the JCC and JCPC regarding the previous passage of a zoning ordinance similarly allowing solar energy facilities. They won, invalidating the Commissioners amendment, as the Circuit Court did not agree the ordinance was found to be consistent with the Comprehensive Plan. Now, the JCC is attempting to bypass this by requesting changes to the Comprehensive Plan.

While we support the expansion of renewable energy, the revisions to the

Comprehensive Plan would encourage solar exempt wholesale generator (EWG) facilities as a Principal Permitted Use with the potential to develop on 80% of Jefferson County's land surface. EWG's require hundreds of acres per each facility. Unlike public utilities, EWGs have no individual consumers, and all electricity generated would be for regional transmission to unknown entities. A Conditional Use designation would allow for evaluation of each project with avenues for public input. We support reasonable solar development that takes into account the concerns of the citizens that will be neighbors.

Reasons we believe solar development should be pursued in a responsible way:

- Solar facilities are commercial activities unrelated to agriculture and therefore should be located first in areas that have been previously used for electric generation, commercial, industrial or mining operations, including brownfields.
- The development of utility scale solar facilities on productive farmland can be destructive to the soil. During construction much of the top soil is cleared or graded, then compacted, and treated with chemicals to control plant growth.
- After construction, these facilities typically provide little, if any permanent employment opportunities to local residents.
- Large scale solar development on agricultural land puts pressure on farming and food supply.
- Negative environmental impacts can occur, including destruction of habitat for wildlife, runoff and soil erosion. Leakage of highly toxic metals can also occur if panels are damaged during storms and not disposed of properly.
- While it is true that the county will likely receive an increase in property tax revenue, one emergency incident at the solar site could cost the county more than any increase in the property tax revenue it experiences.

Key takeaways from the proposed amendment:

- The original Comprehensive Plan states that economic development should be located in municipalities, within urban growth boundaries, and preferred growth areas. The amendment states "The exception to this general philosophy is to allow alternative energy facilities, such as solar

energy development, as a Principal Permitted Use in the County's Rural and Residential Districts as well."

- An agricultural and rural economy goal is to "Amend local land use regulations to permit non-agriculturally related commercial uses by the Conditional Use Permit (CUP) process in the Rural zone if the use is agriculturally and rurally compatible in scale and intensity..." Added to the goals is, "to permit utilities which generate electricity by alternative renewable energy sources (such as solar, wind and hydropower) to be permitted as a principal permitted use throughout the County."
- A new section titled *Utilities in the Rural Environment* was added, which states "the location of transmission lines and substations in Jefferson County are a local resource which could provide opportunities for future renewable energy resources to connect to the power grid in an efficient manner."

Read the full draft amendment [here](#).

The Planning Commission held a special public hearing on Tuesday, December 7th to receive public input on the proposed changes. A recording of the 12/7 hearing can be viewed [here](#). During the hearing, the Commissioners made a motion to take time to consider the comments that were made and postpone a decision until their next meeting on 12/14. Additional comments may be sent to planningdepartment@jeffersoncountywv.org.

The 12/14 meeting will be accessible via

Zoom: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81897159256>

New Legal
Update



JCV has been pursuing several legal cases caused by Rockwool and a lack of transparent government actions. Check out our most recent legal update [here](#).

New Opportunities to Serve in Local Government



Do you want to have a more active role in our community? One way you can help make a positive impact is to participate in public service. There are several new exciting opportunities to serve in local government. Both volunteer and paid positions are available.

The Office of the Jefferson County Prosecuting Attorney is currently seeking a [Legal Assistant/Office Paralegal](#) in its Civil Division. The deadline to apply is **December 30, 2021**. Read the job description [here](#).

The Jefferson County Commission is seeking:

- An [Executive Assistant](#). The deadline to apply is **December 17, 2021**. Read the job description [here](#).
- A [County Administrator](#). Read the job description [here](#).

The Jefferson County Health Department is seeking a Sanitarian. Read more about this position [here](#).

The City of Ranson is seeking a [Parks and Recreation Facility Attendant](#). This position is open until filled. Access the online application [here](#).

The City of Charles Town is currently looking to fill these board vacancies:

- Utility Board
- Tree Board
- Planning Commission
- Board of Zoning Appeals
- Building Commission

The deadline for submitting initial application materials for these vacancies is **December 14, 2021**. Read more about the vacancies [here](#).

View All Current Opportunities

Attending local government meetings is another important way you can be active in the community. Your presence helps to hold our officials accountable to the values and concerns of Jefferson County's citizens. "Think global, act local!"

View This Week's Meetings

Please consider a gift to support our critical work if you are able to. We greatly appreciate every donation. All proceeds benefit JCV's efforts to lead legal, political, and community action to support sustainable growth, without heavy industry, and to empower our citizen's voices to ensure a clean, transparent government in Jefferson County.

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