

Kent County Renewable Energy Task Force
11 December 2015
Meeting Summary

The Kent County 2015 Renewable Energy Task Force (RETF) met on Friday, 11 December 2015 at 9:00 am in the Second Floor Conference room in the R. Clayton Mitchell, Jr. Government Center in Chestertown, MD. The following members attended: Briggs Cunningham, David Hill, Bob Ingersoll, Kim Kohl, Janet Lewis, Ellyn Vail, and Terry Willis. RETF staff in attendance included Amy G. Moredock, Planning Director, Stephanie Jones, Environmental Planner, and Katrina Tucker, Community Planner.

Ms. Moredock requested comments and approval of the 13 November 2015 meeting summary. The summary was accepted as presented.

Discussion of Utility Scale Solar Energy System provisions

The members reviewed and discussed at length the draft amendments presented by staff to the current special exception standards for utility scale solar energy systems in the Agricultural Zoning District (AZD). The members were reminded of the relevance of the vision of the County's Comprehensive Plan to its current discussions, which was included in the RETF's White Paper report in 2010.

Though not cited during the meeting, it states:

Kent County is rich in agricultural, natural, cultural, and human resources. We are challenged, as we look to the future, to protect the quality of our environment and its inherent quality of life while meeting the needs of all our citizens. . . . Although our economy has expanded from a chiefly farm-based and water-related one to one which includes industry, retail, tourism, and other service-oriented businesses, we must continue to seek innovative ways to diversify our economy and provide job opportunities for all Kent County citizens. Vigilantly safe-guarding those precious and irreplaceable resources unique to Kent County and wisely planning for change, we look forward to the challenge of the future.

The Director read the definition of "solar energy system, utility scale" from the County's Land Use Ordinance, which is "[a]ny device or combination of devices or elements which rely upon direct sunlight as an energy source, including but not limited to any substance or device which collects sunlight for generating energy primarily for use off-site. Energy generated may be used to serve on site power needs." There was discussion of the requirements for connecting into transmission lines.

The members present reached consensus to revisit with the entire task force whether utility scale solar energy systems in the Industrial and Employment Center Districts should be permitted to exceed 30 percent of the total acreage of each district. This limitation, if adopted, could be reassessed by the County and reconsidered after a year or two.

The majority of members present concurred on the following provisions, but since so many members were absent from this meeting it was decided that a vote on these changes would be taken at the meeting to be held on 8 January 2016. Staff was requested to offer an explanation of each amended provision and to present both viewpoints in the revised draft amendments that will be sent to the members.

- The area of use may not exceed thirty (30) percent of the total land area zoned AZD.
- Incentives to place the system on Class IV or lessor soils, and if located on Class I or II soils then there should be mitigation.
- Setback of 100 feet from all property lines with evergreen screening to reach a mature height of 8 feet.

Next steps

The members will finalize their discussion of amendments to the current special exception provisions for utility scale solar energy systems in the AZD.