

Kent County Renewable Energy Task Force
8 January 2016
Meeting Summary

The Kent County 2015 Renewable Energy Task Force (RETF) met on Friday, 8 January 2016 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: Walter Bowie, William Cooper, Briggs Cunningham, Bob Ingersol, Kim Kohl, Janet Lewis, Samuel Shoge, Eddie Taylor, 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 advised that a member had emailed a concern with the draft of the 11 December 2015 meeting summary. The summary will be revised to incorporate the concern and presented at the next meeting.

Discussion of Utility Scale Solar Energy System provisions

Ms. Moredock reviewed with the members the mission of the RETF as directed by the County Commissioners, noting that the County Commissioners have an expectation for a text amendment on utility scale solar energy systems to be presented for their consideration. She also advised of the issues concerning the Public Service Commission's (PSC) exemption of the Forest Conservation Act (FCA) to utility scale solar projects in other jurisdictions and the desire of the County to uphold our FCA afforestation requirements for the current projects in the Industrial and Employment Center Districts that are pending before the PSC.

The members continued the review and discussion of the draft amendments presented by staff to the current special exception standards for utility scale solar energy systems in the Agricultural Zoning District (AZD). There was lively dialogue concerning the appropriateness of farmland for the development of solar energy systems, accompanied by the concern of the outcome if this task force fails to offer recommendations to the County Commissioners. A roll call vote was taken with a vote of 7 to 3 that the RETF will craft a text amendment to present to the County Commissioners. The members recognized that their charge is a land use issue.

With the knowledge that total land in the County zoned AZD is 117,643 acres, then the following percentages of land area applied:

5% = 5,882 acres
2.5% = 2,941 acres
1% = 1,176 acres

The committee agreed that the average size of a farm in Kent County totals approximately 160 acres. Considering the average size of the pending projects in the I and EC Districts, an approximate size of 40 acres provides area for a viable utility scale solar project.

- By a vote of 7 to 3, it was determined the aggregate combined project area of all systems may not exceed 1% of the total land area zoned AZD (Agricultural Zoning District).

Next steps

The members will decide on the percentage of an individual parcel that may be encompassed by a project, and finalize their discussion of amendments to the current special exception provisions for utility scale solar energy systems in the AZD.