

LINN COUNTY RENEWABLE ENERGY REVIEW COMMITTEE

January 26, 2023

Balancing Agriculture and Solar
Meeting Summary



Kickoff Meeting

- All four committees (Good Neighbor Practices, Battery Energy Storage, Balancing Agriculture and Solar, and Lifecycle Costs) met as one group for a “kickoff meeting”.
- Staff liaisons were introduced. Each committee has been assigned one staff liaison to assist with research and logistics.
- Staff introduced the Linn County Core Values, explaining that committee members are expected to adhere to them throughout the process.
- The purpose of the committees was discussed with participants. Staff shared examples of committee “products” (statements).
- Staff outlines the process and schedule and set a hard deadline of April 30th for completion of committee work.
- Following the kickoff meeting, each committee broke off on their own.
- The PowerPoint slides used by staff for the kickoff meeting are included in Appendix A at the end of this document.

Kickoff Meeting

- All committee members discussed document sharing options, and it was decided that a Google Drive containing folders for each committee would be utilized. Committee members will be able to view information used by other committees.
- A discussion was had on what “consensus” means, as committees must produce statements via group consensus. It was decided that committees will endeavor to arrive at a statement all five members can agree on. In the event a committee is experiencing gridlock and is not able to come to full agreement, consensus can be formed with three members instead of five.
- A question was asked on the meeting summaries (publicly available documents which will be posted on the Linn County webpage) and whether committee members will be able to review the summaries before they are made publicly available. Staff confirmed that committee members would have the chance to review and comment on summaries, and that summaries for the previous meeting must be approved by the committee at their next meeting before they are posted on the Renewable Energy Review Committees webpage.

Balancing Agriculture and Solar

- Following the kickoff meeting with all committees, the Balancing Agriculture and Solar (BAS) committee met on their own in the Planning & Development Department Conference Room on the 1st Floor of the Jean Oxley Public Service Center.

- The Balancing Agriculture and Solar Committee members are:

Balancing Agriculture and Solar	
Steve Emerson (Architect)	Diane Brecht (Planning and Zoning Commission Member)
Greg Bickal (Coggon Solar non-participating adjoining landowner)	Tom Wieseler (City of Mount Vernon - Mayor)
Gary Scott (Semi retired electrical energy engineer)	Mike Tertinger (Linn County staff liaison)

- Also in attendance for the Jan 26 BAS committee meeting was Jon Gallagher; Resource Conservationist and Director of the Linn County Soil Conservation Department, and the Linn County Affiliate to the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)

Balancing Agriculture and Solar

- The Balancing Agriculture and Solar committee started off their first meeting by having each member discuss, in their own words, what it means to balance agriculture interests with solar energy interests. This conversation led to the group listing all possible areas of focus. The listed areas were as follows:
 - Necessity for protection of soil health, water quality, and wildlife/pollinator habitat
 - Incentivization options for alternative solar project designs
 - Invasive species
 - Offsetting agricultural job losses resulting from a solar project
 - Seed mixes
 - Habitat corridor protection or establishment
 - Educational opportunities & university collaboration
 - Fencing design requirements/standards
 - Necessity for regrading / vegetative management / agricultural impact plans
 - Panel height requirements
 - Agrivoltaics / solar grazing
 - Operations and Management Plan enforcement & monitoring

Balancing Agriculture and Solar

- Following the focus areas discussion, the BAS committee then discussed:
 - Need for prioritizing focus areas at the next meeting
 - How the committee will collaborate, communicate and share research information
 - Via google drive and email with P&D staff member was agreed upon
 - Establishing future meeting time/dates/locations
 - What documents to review before the next meeting
 - Existing Linn County Utility-Scale Solar Ordinance
 - Vegetative Management Plans and Agricultural Impact Plans presented by Coggon Solar and Duane Arnold I & II projects
 - Review of existing local experts document and submittal of possible additional experts or research materials to P&D staff member or google drive

Balancing Agriculture and Solar

Committee members identified additional information they wanted to review for their next meeting as well as industry experts they would like to speak with.

Additional Information Requested

- Information about the Minnesota solar project site visited by the Linn Clean Energy Taskforce / additional MN Solar projects utilizing a Vegetative Management Scorecard

Industry Experts Proposed or recommended

- Rob Davis – Community and Public Relations - Connexus Energy
- Mike Retterer – Pheasants Forever - Rights of Way and Energy Coordinator
- Colleen Hollinger – Natural Resource Service Business and Industry Development
- Arlo Hark - Cannon Valley Graziers Association
- Tom Karas - American Solar Grazing Society
- Paula Kalinosky – EOR Inc. - Water Resources Engineer
- Ruth McCabe – Conservation Agronomist - Heartland Co-Op

Future committee meeting dates were set for February 2, Feb 9, and Feb 16



Balancing Agriculture and Solar

Documents reviewed by committee members ahead of the 1/26/23 Good Neighbor Practices Committee meeting included:

1. [Linn County's current renewable energy overlay zoning ordinances.](#)
2. [The Coggon Solar project staff report.](#)
3. [The Duane Arnold Solar Phase I and Phase II projects staff report.](#)
4. [The Linn County Core Values statement.](#)
5. [The Linn County Comprehensive Plan.](#)
6. [The Linn Clean Energy District Solar Fact Find Taskforce Recommendations.](#)
7. [Agricultural Mitigation Plan – Coggon Solar](#)
8. [Agricultural Impact Mitigation Plan – Duane Arnold I](#)
9. [Agricultural Impact Mitigation Plan – Duane Arnold II](#)
10. [Vegetative Management Plan – Coggon Solar](#)
11. [Vegetative Management Plan – Duane Arnold I](#)
12. [Vegetative Management Plan – Duane Arnold II](#)
13. [Site Plan – Coggon Solar](#)
14. [Site Plan – Duane Arnold I](#)
15. [Site Plan – Duane Arnold II](#)

Appendix A: Kickoff Meeting PowerPoint Slides

**LINN COUNTY
RENEWABLE ENERGY REVIEW
COMMITTEES**

January 26, 2023

Kickoff Meeting



Introductions

Good Neighbor Practices

Mike Carberry	Tina Dubois
Marc Franke	Kelly Merta
Eric VanKerckhove	Charlie Nichols (staff)

Battery Energy Storage Systems

Sara Alden	Curt Eilers
Bruce Lindholm	Junior Luensman
Steve Myres	Stephanie Lientz (staff)

Balancing Agriculture and Solar

Diane Brecht	Greg Bickal
Steve Emerson	Gary Scott
Tom Wieseler	Mike Tertinger (staff)

Lifecycle Costs

Griffin Kuntz	Randy Lucore
Carolyn Petersen	Jane Tompkins
Ellis Vann	Tamara Marcus (staff)

Linn County Core Values



COMMUNICATE

openly + effectively



RECOGNIZE

valued contributions



CREATE

a supportive + positive work environment



DEMONSTRATE

personal integrity + respect for others



BE ACCOUNTABLE

for your actions + decisions



Purpose of Committees

- Analyze and research whether Linn County ordinances related to renewable energy development are adequately meeting their intent.
- Committees will produce statements based on research and analysis of priority issues.
- Committees will NOT be developing ordinance amendments.
- Any ordinance amendments resulting from this process will apply to new renewable energy projects, not previously approved ones.

Good Neighbor Practices Example

- Good Neighbor Committee areas of focus: code related to reducing potential conflicts between dissimilar uses.
- Suggested specific areas of focus: setbacks, screening.

Example Statements

“We feel the 300’ setback from solar panels to occupied dwellings is sufficient to reasonably reduce conflicts between residential and utility-scale solar uses. We believe this because.....(explain the research and analysis that led the group to this conclusion).”

OR

“We feel the 300’ setback from solar panels to occupied dwellings is not sufficient to reasonably reduce conflicts between residential and utility-scale solar uses. We believe this because.....(explain the research and analysis that led the group to this conclusion).”

Battery Energy Storage Systems Example

- Battery Energy Storage Systems areas of focus: safety.
- Suggested specific areas of focus: setbacks, off gas detection.

Example Statements

“We feel the standard 50’ district setback is sufficient to reasonably mitigate safety risks to the public in the event of a fire or other incident at the battery energy storage system. We believe this because.....(explain the research and analysis that led the group to this conclusion).”

OR

“We feel the standard 50’ district setback is not sufficient to reasonably mitigate safety risks to the public in the event of a fire or other incident at the battery energy storage system. We believe this because.....(explain the research and analysis that led the group to this conclusion).”

Balancing Agriculture and Solar Example

- Balancing Agriculture and Solar areas of focus: preservation of agricultural resources, long-term soil fertility .
- Suggested specific areas of focus: vegetation plan, seed mix, agricultural impact mitigation plan.

Example Statements

“We feel the proposed seed mix for each solar project will sufficiently improve long-term soil fertility on the project site. We believe this because.....(explain the research and analysis that led the group to this conclusion).”

OR

“We feel the proposed seed mix for each solar project will not sufficiently improve long-term soil fertility on the project site. We believe this because.....(explain the research and analysis that led the group to this conclusion).”

Lifecycle Costs Example

- Lifecycle Costs areas of focus: financial and environmental responsibility.
- Suggested specific areas of focus: decommissioning plan, operation and maintenance plan.

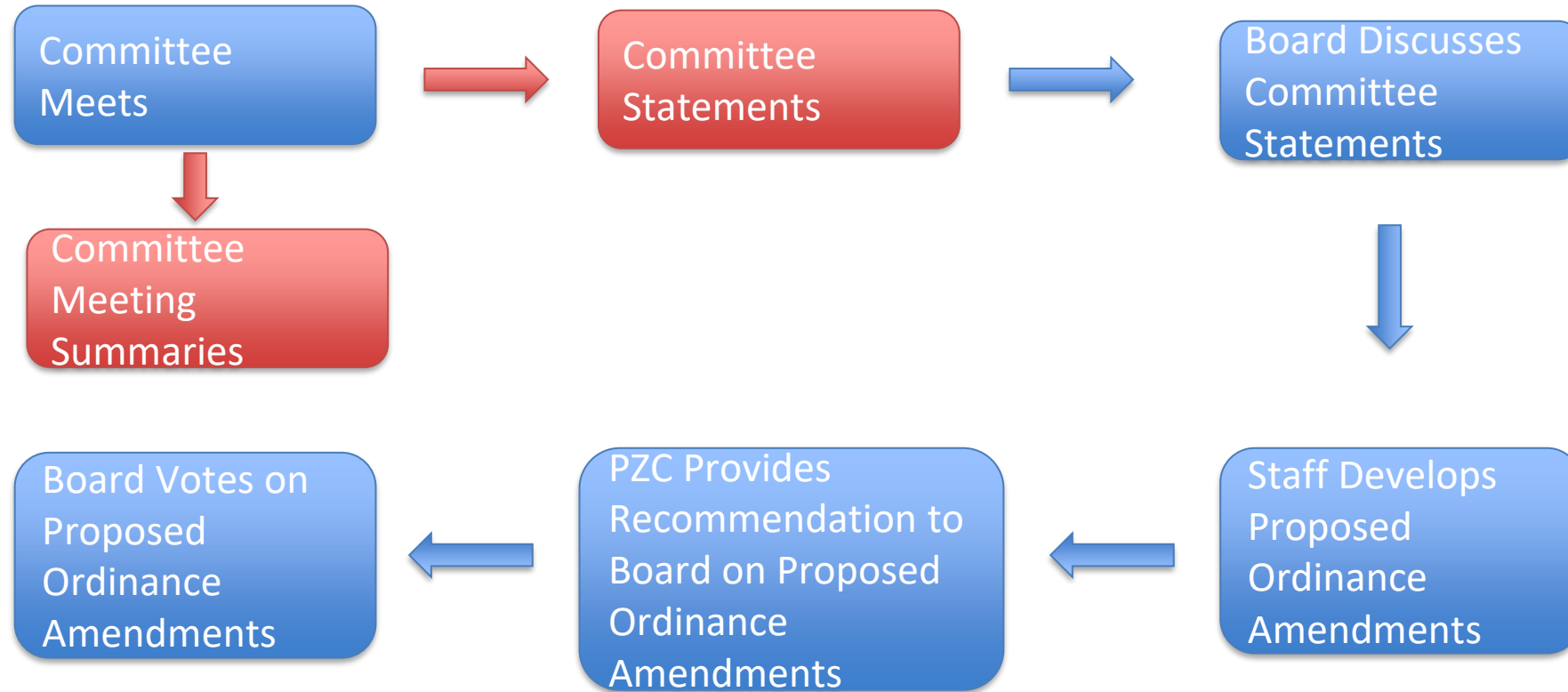
Example Statements

“We feel the cost calculations used in the project decommissioning plans are accurate and will fully cover all end-of-life costs for each project. We believe this because.....(explain the research and analysis that led the group to this conclusion).”

OR

“We feel the cost calculations used in the project decommissioning plans are not accurate and will not fully cover all end-of-life costs for each project. We believe this because.....(explain the research and analysis that led the group to this conclusion).”

Process



Timeline

Hard deadline: **April 30, 2023.**

Soft deadline: **March 31, 2023.**



Committee Meeting Procedures

- Note taker.
- Meetings of each committee MUST have staff present.
 - Target 2-3 additional meetings before 3/31.
- Approve summary from previous meeting.
- Discuss research/questions.
- Meet with industry expert(s).
- Make statement(s).
 - Statements must be agreed on via group consensus. All committee members must be present to formalize a statement.
 - Committee members welcome to come to Board meeting where statements are presented.

Goals for Today

- Introductions.
- Prioritize specific areas of focus.
- Identify industry experts to meet with.
- Identify information needed to produce statement.
- Decide how to share information.
- Set up next meeting.