

DECEMBER 20, 2023

The Board of Supervisors of Clinton County, Iowa, met at the Clinton County Rock Creek Eco Center in Camanche, IA. Present were Supervisors Irwin, Srp and George. Minutes of the previous meeting were read and approved.

6:00 P.M. Review Correspondence and Claims
Call to Order – Pledge of Allegiance
Formal Action & Motions

RESOLUTIONS

The following resolution was presented and on motion approved:

RESOLUTION 2023-298

WHEREAS, Wendy Merkel, Secretary I, of the County Attorney's Office, has given notice of her resignation at the end of the business day effective December 15, 2023; now

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, by the Board of Supervisors of Clinton County, Iowa, that the employment of Wendy Merkel, Secretary I, with the County Attorney's Office, ends effective December 15, 2023, at midnight; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the County Auditor be and is hereby authorized to discontinue paychecks for wages effective December 15, 2023, at midnight.

Roll Call: George: Yes; Srp: Yes; Irwin: Yes.

Jim Irwin, Jr., Chairperson

The following resolution was presented and on motion approved:

RESOLUTION 2023-299

WHEREAS, certain departments in the various funds of the County may overspend and there are sufficient funds available in the said service areas to cover these expenditures; now

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED by the Board of Supervisors that the following office funds be adjusted to wit:

General Basic Fund – Revenues	from	\$15,483,909	to	\$15,488,909
General Basic Fund – Expenses	from	\$15,432,670.56	to	\$16,329,916.56
General Supp. Fund – Expenses	from	\$8,073,279.04	to	\$8,481,276.04
Rural Basic Fund – Expenses	from	\$2,881,520	to	\$2,886,520
REAP Fund - Expenses	from	\$30,000	to	\$56,000
County Attorney Recovery Fund-Expenses	from	\$0.00	to	\$15,000
Conservation Land Acq. Fund-Expenses	from	\$170,000	to	\$240,000

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the County Auditor be and is hereby authorized to make the above adjustments to the fiscal year 2024 County budget.

6:07 P.M. Public Hearing

Chairman Irwin called a public hearing into order to solicit public comments on a proposed map amendment to the Clinton County Zoning Ordinance changing the designation of certain property in Eden and Camanche Townships from A-1 (prime agriculture) to RE (renewable energy overlay).

Proof of publication was presented, accepted and returned for filing.

Present were Supervisors Srp and George, County Auditor Eric Van Lancker, public and media.

NextEra representatives provided a presentation about the proposed solar project in Eden and Camanche townships. The project is titled Rock Creek Solar. It was reported that the project will bring to Clinton County 200 construction jobs during the build followed by one to two full-time jobs. The economic impact is expected to be \$1.7 million annually in new local long-term output for the County. It is estimated to produce \$11.5 million in property taxes over the life of the project, which is expected to be 30 years with a potential 10-year extension. It is also estimated to produce \$6.2 million in school district revenue over the life of the project. They said the current plan does not include a battery site, but it could be requested in the future. NextEra plans to complete the permit process in 2024 and begin construction as early as 2025. It is expected to be operational in the fourth quarter of 2026. Supervisor Irwin said the Supervisors have received 12 emails in favor of the project. He said he has received one email asking for more details including vegetation planted around the project. Supervisor George said she has had one conversation with someone against the project. Keith Boyson, one of the landowners in the project, said this is a landowner use issue and landowners should be able to use their land as long as it falls within the laws of the state and local government. He said this project will be dust free, chemical free and protect the land. He said the project will be a leader in green energy. He said they are also working with landowners who border the project. He said NextEra is also prioritizing local labor. He said they are also planning an appropriate amount for a decommissioning bond. Scott Harksen, a property owner in the project, spoke in support of the project. He said payments from the project will help keep the land in his family and will diversify his property. He said the project will create jobs in the area that will benefit businesses in the County. He said NextEra is going above and beyond to protect the land. Thomas Bean works to support green energy projects across the street. He said this project will bring benefits to the

landowners and the community. He said this project will help landowners keep the land in their family and provide income for them. Royce Peterson, a representative for the carpenter's union, commended NextEra for prioritizing local labor that will be good paying jobs with benefits and supports the project. The land agent for NextEra read some letters in support of the project from participating and adjacent landowners. Those letters are included with the minutes packet for this meeting. Stephanie Gustafson said she and her husband live close to the project and wanted to know why she wasn't contacted about these meetings and wanted to know how many people in the room were going to be next to participating land. She said she didn't purchase land in the County to look at a solar farm. Supervisor Srp said the County ordinance addresses fencing and planting around the solar fields. Caleb Beer said he lives within 500 feet of the project and has not received any notification. He's guessing many of the landowners who signed off on the project are older than 50 and the next generation will need to deal with the decommissioning. He asked about the disposal of solar panels. Irwin said there is a facility starting in Indiana that will be recycling the panels. Beer also wondered why the property isn't being purchased instead of leased. He is also concerned with the views from his home. He said this will also hurt future local farmers as it is less land to be farmed and farmers spend their money here in the County. William Gearhart works in outreach for labor unions across the state. He said he got to know the NextEra people through the Linn County project and found them to be honest and straightforward and worked to form a collective bargaining agreement using local labor. He added that for construction workers, these jobs are not temporary jobs. They are another job they patch together for a career and retirement. Ian Boyson, participating landowner in the project, said he thought about what this project meant to the future. He said both corn and solar can be used for energy and it helps landowners diversify their business. Jim Boyson said not all the minuses are being considered for solar. He said the maximum efficiency is not that great and still needs a backup of coal-fired plants and the project still needs concrete and supplies that come from mining. He said solar would be better used in areas that have no energy at all. He said nuclear is a better source of power than solar. He added Iowa has one of the richest soils in the nation and should not be taken away for solar farms. Another person attending via Zoom said his property would be surrounded by the project on three sides. He is worried about home value because who would want to live in a place surrounded by solar. Lewis Todtz, participating landowner, said NextEra has been fabulous to work with and is respecting private property rights. He said sometimes being innovative comes with some controversy. He said this facility, Eco Center, was not owned by Clinton County at one time, but through innovation it was purchased and has become a value to the community. He said the local nuclear power plant will be decommissioned some day and this keeps power generation local. Irwin said after approving the first solar project in the County, Alliant Energy met with him and talked about the generation of power in Iowa. He said they reported there are no plans for expansion of energy generation in the state. He said wind and solar are the leading energy production for the future in the state. Irwin said he understands concerns of land values near the solar farms. He said he has read many studies on the topic. He said the County has included in its ordinance a set-back of 300 feet and believes that is a limit that will benefit both sides of the project. Irwin said he visited areas where solar farms are and visited neighbors who reported they were treated well by the developers. Irwin said these are not easy decisions because they are impactful. George said for her it comes down to landowner rights. George said she has been through a similar situation with her property where she lives and a neighboring property. She said she has seen families split over this issue and understands it can be polarizing, but it comes down to landowner rights. Srp said he has worked to make sure that a good decommissioning plan is in place. He said a financial bond is required and the land must be 100% decommissioned. Srp said when he voted for the first project, he understood his property will be next to a proposed project, but he's set his personal feelings aside appreciating landowner rights. He said there are also concerns with voting down a project outside of the requirements set by ordinance. Srp said this is also an opportunity to reduce the burden on taxpayers through additional revenue that could be generated from this project. Irwin would like to schedule the resolution for the January 8 Board of Supervisors meeting.

MOTION by Supervisor Srp to adjourn the public hearing.

Roll Call: George: Yes; Srp: Yes; Irwin: Yes.
adjourned at 7:42 p.m.

Motion carried. The public hearing was

The Board of Supervisors adjourned to meet at 9:00 a.m. on Tuesday, January 2, 2024, at the Clinton County Administration Building, Clinton, IA, 52732.

Eric Van Lancker, County Auditor

Jim Irwin, Jr., Chairperson

-APPROVED-

County Auditor

Chairperson