

MONTHLY ZONING AND PLANNING REPORT

March 11, 2025 – County Services Committee

ACTIONS COMING FROM THE ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS –

1. Petition No. 25-P-1638 by Craig A. and Christine Kessel, as owners of certain real property identified as PIN 02-15-19-200-004 and commonly known as 859 Morgan Road, Amboy, Illinois, in Amboy Township, Lee County, Illinois, filed a Petition for Special Use with the Lee County Zoning Office requesting a special use permit for the purpose of Auto Repair – Minor, as defined by the Lee County Zoning Ordinance. The parcel is currently zoned Ag-1, Rural/Agricultural District and is 1.24 acres in size.

This petition was heard on March 6, 2025. Following the public hearing, **the Zoning Board of Appeals voted unanimously (4-0) to recommend approval of this petition to the County Board, with the following conditions:**

1. Petitioners shall be limited to working on five (5) customer vehicles at one time. These vehicles will be allowed to remain onsite for a period of seven (7) days.
2. No vehicles shall be parked or stored in the public right-of-way.
3. No signs shall be placed on the property unless such signage is approved through the Lee County Zoning Office.
4. Storage of customer vehicles that are being worked on shall be in the designated location only: near the southwest corner of the property.
5. Petitioners shall not operate a junkyard or scrap processing facility from the Subject Realty.
6. Petitioners shall comply with the IL State Plumbing Code for auto repair shops.
7. Petitioners shall comply with, among other things, the hazardous materials section of the Lee County Code (Title 10, Chapter 15, Section 12).
8. Should the Subject Realty transfer ownership to anyone other than the Petitioners, the special use permit shall become null and void upon transfer to any new owner.

ACTIONS GOING TO THE ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS –

1. Petition No. 25-P-1639 by Mound Hill Road North Solar, LLC, as lessee of certain real property identified as PIN 16-07-05-300-005, in Palmyra Township, Lee County, Illinois, filed a Petition for Special Use with the Lee County Zoning Office requesting a special use permit for a 5 MW

Commercial Solar Energy Facility (community solar). The parcel is located on the east side of Mound Hill Road, approximately one-half mile north of Illinois Route 2. The parcel is currently zoned Ag-1, Rural/Agricultural District and is 67.29 acres in size.

2. Petition No. 25-P-1640 by Mound Hill Road South Solar, LLC, as lessee of certain real property identified as PIN 16-07-05-300-006 and 16-07-08-100-004, in Palmyra Township, Lee County, Illinois, filed a Petition for Special Use with the Lee County Zoning Office requesting a special use permit for a 2 MW Commercial Solar Energy Facility (community solar). The parcels are located on the east side of Mound Hill Road, approximately seven tenths of a mile north of Illinois Route 2. The parcels are currently zoned Ag-1, Rural/Agricultural District and are collectively 67.29 acres in size.

ACTIONS COMING FROM THE PLANNING COMMISSION –

1. Petition No. 25-PC-78 by the Lee County Zoning Administrator, was filed in which Petitioner seeks to amend the text of Title 10: ZONING REGULATIONS of the Lee County Code of Ordinances to replace Zoning Board of Appeals with Zoning Hearing Officer and to create standards for amending Special Use Permit that have been previously approved by the Lee County Board

This petition was heard on March 3, 2025. Following the public hearing, **the Regional Planning Commission voted unanimously (4-0) to recommend approval of this petition to the County Board with the following revisions:**

1. The text should include language that allows for the removal of a zoning hearing officer.
2. The text should include language that limits the term(s) of the zoning hearing officer.
3. The text should include language that will allow the County Board to annually review the zoning hearing officer.
4. The text should not allow the zoning hearing officer to create their own Rules of Procedure and that the County Board should have some say in those Rules.

ACTIONS GOING TO THE PLANNING COMMISSION – None

OTHER ACTIONS FROM THE ZONING OFFICE

Deputy Zoning Administrator Laura Mangrum has taken a position as a Floodplain Specialist for the State of New Mexico. Her last day with the County was February 19, 2025. We wish her the best on her new endeavor.

Last month, I attended POWERGEN International 2025 in Dallas, Texas. POWERGEN brings together over 8,000 industry professionals, including power utilities, hardware vendors, and equipment

manufacturers. The event focused on the evolving landscape of energy generation, demand growth, grid resilience, and innovative technologies shaping the future of the power sector.

Some of the key highlights are listed below. These insights reflect the industry's shift toward pragmatic, multi-faceted strategies that balance reliability, sustainability, and technological innovation.

1. **Resurgence of Traditional Power Sources:** Discussions highlighted a renewed interest in natural gas and nuclear energy. Keynote speakers, including representatives from NVIDIA (a major data center developer) and Entergy, emphasized the growing demand for firm generation capacity to support expanding AI-driven energy needs.
2. **Advancement in Hydrogen and Energy Storage:** Innovations aimed at decarbonization and long-duration energy storage were showcased. Notably, Westinghouse presented a compelling energy storage solution, while Modern Hydrogen introduced a methane-to-hydrogen conversion process using pyrolysis. This technology allows methane to be transported efficiently before converting it to hydrogen at the point of use, with the remaining carbon repurposed for asphalt production.
3. **Impact of Artificial Intelligence on Energy Demand:** NVIDIA's keynote addressed the surge in energy consumption driven by artificial intelligence workloads, underscoring the need for reliable power sources to support this growth.
4. **Emergence of Grid-Edge Technologies:** The event featured discussions on behind-the-meter solutions, microgrids, and portable energy storage, highlighting the importance of data-driven decision-making in modern energy management.

The Big Sky Wind, LLC wind project is under new ownership as of the beginning of this year. Potentia will be taking over the business side of the project from Exus. Exus will stay on to oversee the energy side of the project.

In accordance with being substantially underway, Deriva Energy has provided an update to the County on the South Dixon Solar project. The project has completed Phase II interconnection studies with PJM and is moving into Phase III. Upon the successful completion of Phase III, interconnection shall be awarded.

Lee County is now requiring architectural plans that are sealed by an Illinois licensed design professional for all commercial buildings as defined by the State of Illinois. The State defines "commercial building" as any building other than: 1) a single-family home or dwelling containing 2 or fewer apartments, condominiums, or townhouses; or 2) a farm building as exempted from Section 3 of the Illinois Architecture Practice Act of 1989.

Lee County is also now requiring plan reviews for all commercial buildings as defined by the State of Illinois. We will be partnering with Kelly Reynolds who handles plan reviews for over 200 municipalities and counties across the country. Currently, Whiteside County, the City of Sterling and the City of Dixon utilize his services. The cost of the service will be paid directly by the building permit applicant.

By requiring architectural plans and plan reviews for all commercial buildings, Lee County is ensuring that these structures are constructed properly, reducing and/or eliminating the risks to the health, safety, and general welfare of the public that may enter these commercial structures.

During the month of February 2025, the Zoning Office processed fifteen (15) building permits. Permit fees in the amount of \$843.20 were collected.