

**MINUTES OF THE BEECHER PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION
(THE PZC)**

Thursday, October 23, 2025 at 7:00 p.m.

***Beecher Village Hall
625 Dixie Highway***

Commissioner Schuitema called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM

All present joined in the pledge to the flag.

ROLL CALL. Members present: Commissioners Barber, Eich, Hearn, Heim, Serviss and Schuitema.

Members absent: Commissioner Gardner.

Staff present: Administrator Mitchell (Virtually), Superintendent Conner, and Pete Iosue of Teska Associates.

Guests: Village President Meyer, Trustee Stacey, Trustee Smith, Pedro Rodriguez from Black Swan (Virtually), and Ryan Dunfee from Earthrise Energy.

CONSIDER APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF THE August 28, 2025 MEETING. Commissioner Eich motioned to approve the minutes of the August 28, 2025 PZC meeting as submitted. Commissioner Serviss seconded.

AYES: Commissioners Barber, Eich, Hearn Serviss, and Schuitema.

NAYS: None.

ABSTAIN: Commissioner Heim.

Motion carried.

RECOGNITION OF THE PUBLIC - None.

PRESENTATION OF PROPOSED COMMERCIAL SOLAR FACILITY TO BE LOCATED ON PROPERTY SOUTHEAST OF BEECHER WITHIN THE 1.5 MILE PLANNING JURISDICTION (BETWEEN INDIANA AVE AND CORNING RD) WAS VIRTUALLY GIVEN BY PEDRO RODRIQUEZ FROM BLACK SWAN DEVELOPMENT.

Mr. Rodriguez explained that Black Swan is looking to purchase approximately 60 acres of land, divided into two parcels, for the development of a 40-acre solar project. The property is zoned AG-1 and will require a special use permit from Will County.

Regarding the disposal of solar panels at the end of their lifespan, Mr. Rodriguez stated that the panels will be disassembled and recycled in accordance with all applicable rules, regulations, and bylaws. Commissioner Serviss inquired about emergency contact procedures and local maintenance, given that Black Swan is based in Connecticut. Mr. Rodriguez explained that emergency and contact information will be clearly posted at the facility's front gate and that a local representative will be available 24 hours a day for any issues or repairs. He also noted that the system includes an emergency shut-off button that can immediately power down operations if

necessary.

Commissioner Schuitema asked whether Black Swan had been in contact with the local fire department. Mr. Rodriguez responded that they have not yet established contact but plan to conduct fire safety training and coordinate with the fire department prior to finalizing any contracts. Commissioner Schuitema also inquired about landscaping and site maintenance. Black Swan explained that, because the site is not visible to the public, no additional perimeter landscaping is planned. Instead, they intend to use one sheep per acre to manage grass and vegetation growth naturally.

Commissioner Barber asked if wetland surveying had begun and noted that access to the facility would be from Indiana Avenue. He added that the access road would need to be improved and maintained during the winter months to ensure accessibility. Commissioner Barber also asked if Black Swan currently has the capacity to connect to the ComEd power grid. Mr. Rodriguez stated that this connection has not yet been confirmed.

Commissioner Serviss motioned to recommend submitting a letter of non-objection for a special use permit for the commercial solar facility (Indiana and Corning Rd) to the Village Board approval. Commissioner Schuitema seconded.

AYES: Commissioners Barber, Eich, Hearn, Heim and Serviss.

NAYS: None.

ABSTAIN: Commissioner Schuitema.

Motion carried.

PRESENTATION OF PROPOSED COMMERCIAL SOLAR ENERGY FACILITIES TO BE LOCATED ON PROPERTY NORTHWEST OF BEECHER (SOUTH AND NORTH OF EAGLE LAKE RD AND EAST AND WEST OF ASHLAND AVE).

Mr. Dunfee provided an overview of the Earthrise project, explaining that the facilities are connected to the transmission lines, not the distribution portion of the electric grid. The facilities are designed to operate only during short periods of peak demand, such as the hottest days of summer or the coldest days of winter, and are expected to run fewer than 50 hours per year. The project will utilize the existing grid and interconnection systems, with the first year of operation anticipated in 2028.

Mr. Dunfee noted that the facilities will be 100% union-built, supporting several hundred construction jobs over an 18–24 month period. The company currently staffs a nearby natural gas plant and plans to add four to five full-time employees for ongoing monitoring once the project is operational.

Earthrise is also developing scholarship programs in partnership with Governors State University and Joliet Junior College. An open house was held in February for local fire protection districts, and a Community Benefit Program was held in September. Under this program, villages located within 1.5 miles of the project site will receive a \$100,000 grant to invest in community improvements.

Commissioner Schuitema inquired whether Earthrise operates as its own entity. Mr. Dunfee

confirmed that it is a privately owned organization.

Commissioner Barber asked whether the company was leasing or purchasing land, and whether any parcels were obtained from the State of Illinois. Mr. Dunfee explained that the project involves a combination of purchases and leases, with no property acquired from the State.

Commissioner Barber expressed concern regarding a parcel located near the Bult Field Airport runway, citing potential issues with the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT). Mr. Dunfee responded that Earthrise has been in contact with the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) and is currently awaiting feedback.

When asked about the location and design of the Peaker plant, Mr. Dunfee stated that all components will be installed underground where feasible, except for areas that require overhead crossings, such as railroads, creeks, or roads, where underground installation is not permitted.

In response to questions regarding the project's duration, Mr. Dunfee explained that most lease terms are 30–35 years, with optional extensions allowing for a maximum project life of approximately 50 years. Earthrise is also engaged in annexation discussions for certain properties near Crete. Commissioner Barber asked whether Earthrise would pledge not to allow any parcels within Washington Township to be annexed by any municipality other than Beecher. Mr. Dunfee stated that the company would consider the request and discuss it further. Commissioner Barber noted that Beecher maintains boundary agreements to the west, east, and south, but not to the north, and expressed a desire to make Offner Road the boundary line with Crete.

Mr. Dunfee added that once the solar field has reached the end of its operational life (30–50 years), the land will be restored to its pre-project condition. Earthrise will maintain a full-time grounds crew responsible for mowing throughout most of the growing season and will utilize low-grow grass seeding to maintain the property.

Commissioner Barber inquired about the power generation capacity of the facility. Mr. Dunfee stated that the project will produce approximately 260 megawatts, which is sufficient to power about 165,000 homes. Commissioner Barber also asked when the project is expected to become operational. Mr. Dunfee explained that Earthrise is preparing to submit its special use permit applications to both the village and the county. If the permitting process proceeds as planned, construction will begin in mid-summer 2026, with operations commencing in the first quarter of 2028.

Commissioner Barber motioned to recommend submitting a letter of non-objection for a special use permit for the commercial solar facility (Eagle Lake Rd and Ashland Ave) to the Village Board approval. Commissioner Eich seconded

AYES: Commissioners Barber, Eich, Hearn, Heim, Serviss and Schuitema.

NAYS: None.

ABSTAIN: None.

Motion carried.

The next regularly scheduled meeting for the PZC is Thursday, November 20th, 2025, at 6:00 PM.

OLD BUSINESS - None.

NEW BUSINESS - None

ADJOURNMENT. Commissioner Heim motioned to adjourn the meeting. Commissioner Serviss seconded.

AYES: Commissioners Barber, Eich, Hearn, Heim, Schuitema, and Serviss.

NAYS: None.

ABSTAIN: None.

Motion carried.

Meeting adjourned at 8:20 PM

Respectfully submitted,

Heidi Demas
Planning and Zoning Secretary