

Dachs, Alex

From: Gessaman <1kfalcon@gmail.com>
Sent: Friday, November 18, 2016 5:15 AM
To: Dachs, Alex
Subject: Rebuttal of Info Provided at Last Night's Portage Solar Hearing

Hi Alex,

At last night's Portage Solar public hearing, Mr. Pankratz testified that my comments earlier in the evening about a "new" housing development next to a proposed solar project in the Missoula area were incorrect. I believe Mr. Pankratz's comments were incorrect. The proposed "new" housing development I was referring to is located across Deer Creek Road (east of the solar farm) and not north (across I-15) of the proposed solar project. The proposed solar farm area is in an area zoned residential.

A story (see attached) from the December 10, 2015 issue of the *Missoulian* was my source of information as I stated at the hearing. Mr. Pankratz claimed his testimony was based on a personal visit to the solar site.

While I realize the ZBOA has already made its decision on this project, I think it is important that the facts be known. Please distribute this information to the ZBOA members.

Ron Gessaman

Begin forwarded message:

From: Gessaman <1kfalcon@gmail.com>
Subject: Fwd: Missoula BOA Grants Solar Farm Exception To Build in Residential Area
Date: July 10, 2016 at 7:51:17 AM MDT
To: "K. G." <1kfalcon@gmail.com>

Appears the Great Falls area is one of the last in Montana to be considered for solar farms. Here's the details on the Missoula solar farm. It's on Deer Creek Road near I 90 east of Missoula.

Note: "conditions that were approved were the landscaping and construction of a non-barbed wire fence 7 to 8 feet high around the property, and construction of a berm with vegetation planted along Deer Creek Road. The latter condition was at the request of Bob Brugh, the landowner on the other side of the road who has a single-residence housing development planned." Ron

Missoula County

Solar farm plan passes Missoula County muster

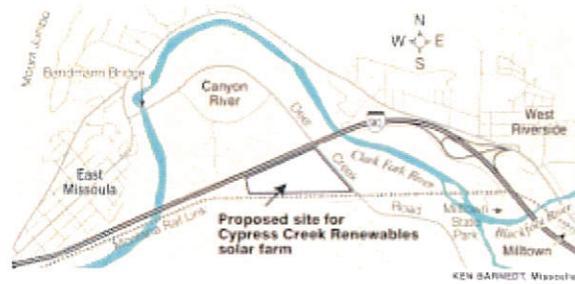
- [KIM BRIGGEMAN kbriggeman@missoulian.com](mailto:kbriggeman@missoulian.com)

- Dec 10, 2015

- 4

http://missoulian.com/news/local/solar-farm-plan-passes-missoula-county-muster/article_d9f2fa7a-b769-5ec1-a0a3-653a63e9012b.html

-
-
-



Buy Now

Missoula is a permit or two away from having its first major solar facility – and one of the first in Montana.

By a 4-1 vote, the Missoula County Board of Adjustment on Thursday granted a renewable energy company a special exception to install a 40-acre solar farm on land zoned residential near Deer Creek Road east of Missoula.

Cypress Creek Renewables' proposal for a 3-megawatt facility was met with a chorus of approval by city and county trail advocates; the Bonner-Milltown Community Council; Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks; the owner of an adjacent shooting range; and the environmental group 350 Missoula.

“Your timing for this hearing is impeccable,” said Jeff Smith of 350 Missoula, noting the United Nations climate talks in Paris this week.

Assuming necessary building permits are approved, construction on the triangle-shaped property bordered by Interstate 90, Deer Creek Road and Montana Rail Link tracks will begin in the spring. Jason Carr, one of the Cypress Creek representatives who came to Missoula this week, said it’ll take three to six months to install some **17,000 solar panels**. They’ll be mounted on an east-to-west tracking system to follow the path of the sun during the day.

Cypress Creek says 3 megawatts can generate enough electricity to power 540 homes. The company, which has solar projects in the works near Hardin and Helena, will enter into an agreement with NorthWestern Energy, which by federal law is required to purchase up to 3 megawatts from solar energy producers.

Nearby transmission lines make the Deer Creek location ideal to connect to the NorthWestern grid, Carr noted.

County planners recommended approval of the zoning exception with three conditions, all of which Cypress Creek agreed to.

One was to establish and record a public non-motorized access easement that will provide a trail through the unused portion of the 60-acre property. It’s an important development in the long-sought Kim Williams Trail extension from Missoula on the south side of the Clark Fork River.

With the easement, the trail can cross under MRL tracks near the bend of the river on the southwest edge of Canyon River Golf Course, said county planner Jamie Erbacher. It can continue east through the undeveloped portion of the Cypress Creek property, which will be purchased from Missoula builder and developer Dave Edgell.

There’s no other viable route, county parks and trails planner Garrick Swanson said in a written comment.

“The importance of this property as a key trail connection far exceeds just a trail extension to Deer Creek Road,” Swanson said. “Rather the Edgell property is a key link to continue an eastbound shared-use trail, connecting into Milltown State Park, Deer Creek recreation area and existing non-motorized city/county trails.”

Adjustment board member Paul Forsting made the motion to approve the zoning exception and went one : further. He moved successfully to strike the trail easement condition as an unnecessary cost for the solar company.

Ross said it made no difference to Cypress Creek, which will provide the easement anyway because that's what the community wants.

Other conditions that were approved were the landscaping and construction of a non-barbed wire fence 7 feet high around the property, and construction of a berm with vegetation planted along Deer Creek Road. The latter condition was at the request of Bob Brugh, the landowner on the other side of the road who has single-residence housing development planned.

The board's lone dissenting vote came from Andy Mefford. He said he had concerns about taking potential residential lands out of their designated usage, and wondered why a company that needs sunshine would invest in a "slot canyon" in Missoula in the first place.

"It just doesn't seem like the right spot," Mefford said. "There's a lot more sunshine in Hardin."