

City of Monticello Planning and Zoning Board Meeting

September 15, 2025

Chairman Mike Hawkins called the meeting to order at 7:00pm. Roll Call was taken by the City Clerk.

ROLL CALL:

Present: Hawkins, Johnson, Beem, Spillman, Pontious, Riegel

Absent: Stone

Also Present: Jim Grabarczyk, Zoning Administrator

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION: There was no in-person or remote participation.

APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES:

A motion was made by Will Pontious, seconded by Shawn Spillman to approve the August 18, 2025 Planning & Zoning Board Meeting minutes. The motion passed with all present voting yes.

OLD BUSINESS:

None

NEW BUSINESS:

A motion was made by Michael Beem, seconded by Shaw Spillman to opened the Public Hearing at 7:02pm.

The Owner of 1215 Raymond Rd Monticello, IL is seeking Rezoning to I-1, General Industrial and a Conditional Use Permit allowing a ground mounted solar array on a parcel currently zoned B – Business.

Jim Grabarczyk gave an overview of the Rezoning and the Conditional Use Permit. Applicant – South Monticello Solar 1, LLC (Owner) is seeking Rezoning to I-1, General Industrial and a Conditional Use Permit allowing a ground mounted solar array on a parcel currently zoned B – Business at the property commonly known as 1215 Raymond Rd Monticello, IL. The City of Monticello Code of Ordinances section §153.017 (A) allows such a structure once a conditional use permit is issued.

Granting the Rezoning and Conditional Use Permit will not be detrimental to or endanger the public health, safety, morals, comfort or general welfare of the normal and orderly development and improvement of surrounding properties.

A vicinity map, aerial view of the property, a copy of the public notice, meeting motion, and agenda are included in this packet.

Supporting documents include an aerial view of the property and a copy of the public notice published in the Piatt County Journal Republican, and meeting motion.

Lindsay McIntrye a developer with SoulSource Power along with the Applicant Suzanne Wells were present for questions.

Board member Shawn Spillman asked if the cables were going to be buried 5ft below grade or 18 inches below grade? It was stated it would be around 18 inches. Shawn then asked if they're 18 inches below grade, they will need to be removed in deconstruction? It was stated yes as per the EMA agreement. Shawn had some discussion about monetary value per and post decommission, however the board was reminded that they are supposed to focus on use. With this type of question being address in the permitting phase.

City Clerk Robin Throneburg read the following letter: *They said they're going to plant pollinators among the solar panels and that would be fine except for all the weed seed out there. It will rain a few times and all that will be there is weeds. The mowings mentioned are a joke. Those weeds will need to be mowed very often to look decent. I was wondering if the city limits ordinance applies if it's rezoned? The noise was mentioned often on the internet and I don't remember that being brought up at the first meeting. They say at times it's very annoying so I would be interested in know how loud they are going to be. The question of how far is safe and healthy from panels varies. 1.86 and 1.2 miles are the longer ones while 1640ft. is mentioned too. The solar farms I've seen are well away from any residential area. I believe this is for a reason. My bedroom window is 224ft. from my property line so I would not be 100 yds from the panels. They say this is low level magnetism is not harmful but a few years ago magnetism from large overhead lines was deemed harmful with long term exposure. I think I'd rather be safe than sorry. I was told the city has to pass this or risk being sued by our governor. I don't know if this is true but even our sorry excuse for a governor can't believe a town Monticello's size needs a big solar farm in the city limits. I haven't found another town this size with a solar farm in the city limits and don't think I will. There are large cities and colleges that have panels in the limits like the U of I but they are not up against a residential area. Money is the common denominator here as usual. Rent money and tax dollars and the collateral damage doesn't seem to matter. I believe if this was happening to any of the board members here you would feel the way I do. My neighbor and myself are being pushed out of the way so that certain people can make more money. I heard there is a petition going around saying how this will benefit the local community. Wind and solar are part of the green movement and known for being the highest price way to produce energy. The one that's going to benefit most from this petition is the one holding it. My lawyer will be looking into this and hopefully will find something to fight with. I certainly think there is a conflict of interest at the very least. Tod Rogers, Marsha Herrington*

Mark Rowe was asking questions on behalf of parents that have property on the south side of the project. These are his/their concerns/questions:

The solar panels will be 20 feet tall and rotate to follow the sun, which would cast glare onto the backyard of their property. Even with the 7ft fence with privacy slats, that would not shield 20 ft solar panels. We are asking what assurances we will have that the glare from the solar panels would not impact my parent's property?

Justin Davis with J.P. Cratts & Company had the following questions:

They are wanting to remove trees on the south side of the property. I just want to make sure they're not wanting to remove trees from our property line due to water/wind erosion purposes, along with flooding issues?

Scott McFarland, he owns property next to proposed site and is a senior trustee for the Mid-Piatt

Fire Protection District he made the following statements:

- Mid-Piatt Fire Protection District last board meeting voted in opposition of this project.
- Mid-Piatt Fire currently runs 60% of the City's fire calls due to staffing issues.
- Mid-Piatt Fire will be the first two fire engines in guaranteed due to the fire station being on Raymond Rd.
- Mid-Piatt Fire is already overwhelmed with helping out other jurisdictions along with the Wind Farm in Deland without adding to it.
- There is usually on average one to two fires in that area already due to the railroad tracks and the trains using their brakes. If weeds get too high, we will not be able to stop the fire so it will be a complete loss of the solar farm.
- Taking good quality farm ground out of production and not being able to put it back into production.
- Construction requires land clearing grading, which is compaction, changes in drainage channels, increased runoff and erosion.
- It effects invasive species ecosystems along with water and soil contamination.
- Planting native prairie mix for pollinators, you do not mow them two or three times a year you mow them once then control it with fire by fall, which helps with seed spreading.
- Comparable solar farms are pretty barren due to compaction that basically turn the whole land into concrete, which make it difficult for seeds to properly propagate and grow.
- Solar Farms Engineering study map topographical marks show the water run off coming straight at the front door of my building. So, they are wanting to put a rock pad nine feet eight inches above my concrete floor. There are other buildings in the same area that have water issues every time it rains.
- Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory study found there was 1.5% decrease in property values based on 2023 study. Loyola University study found houses within a half mile depreciate 2.5 to 8.9% following construction of solar, particularly in rural areas. Louisiana State Center for Energy Studies found 1.5 to 6.9% decrease in property values from arrays within 0.6 miles.
- State legislation new guidelines in affect article 153-035 storm water management states all new construction involving a significant increase of impermeable surfaces shall provide adequate on-site storm water detention and storm water drainage facilities.
- All drainage systems designed and constructed shall comply with provisions of chapter 52 storm water management where stormwater regulations with the municipal code conflict the most stringent of regulations shall prevail as determined by city staff so that actually came straight off the city website of the state statute that being said there is no talk of detention basins anything in there the current detention basin in Bear Park next to the dog park is already silted in and cannot take any more water we already have drainage issues.
- More water flow from sheer erosion off these panels being an impermeable surface will affect flooding issues along the creek that leads into town up behind the grocery store next to FS gas station.
- Wildlife determinant, mental anguish, emotional impact, potential aquifer contamination.
- PZB and City Council in 2023 passed the future land use plan, which stated that the best use for this land is a single-family residential use not industrial.
- Will this project better our town or bring it down? We need to set a precedence because if we allow this solar farm, we can't stop any in the future. If we have them on all the sides of town, then how will the town grow? We're going to have void waste areas of solar farms and housing spread out between them.
- I have been to 30 different solar field sites and not one of them is up to our city zoning standards that would have to be maintain.

- They are planning a gravel road, however our current statute for zoning is that has to be a dust free surface to which includes has to be oil and chip, asphalt or concrete. Also, looking at wear and tear of the whole road.
- What is their plan if a major disaster happens and if they have money/insurance set aside? My shop is 150 ft downhill from their property, I have several thousand pounds of nitrates along with other chemicals and if water gets into it everything downstream would be an EPA cleanup nightmare as well as being expensive.
- Mary Miller is currently working on bill to help municipalities to be able to block solar and wind farms.

Steve Shreffler made the following statement:

- That he wanted the Planning and Zoning Board to consider on the information provided and to make a good informed recommendation to the City Council.

State Representative Regan Deering made the following statements/questions:

- Illinois State Association of Counties has taken up a position statement has proposed some legislation that specifically is an effort to allow counties to best represent their residents when it comes to entering into agreements for renewable energies, primarily wind and solar. When considering approval or denial of a special use permit for a commercial solar or wind energy facility, if the facility is within one and a half miles of municipalities planning boundary. Either the facility conflicts with the municipality's adoptive comprehensive plan or significant infrastructure investments like roads, water, sewer or utilities have been made to support anticipated residential or commercial development in the area.
- Is the property currently zoned business? It was stated yes.
- Is there a current comprehensive plan that the City of Monticello has adopted for the boundaries of this current zoning? It was stated yes.
- So, that's the biggest question is, would this new proposed conditional use permit for a solar production facility be in line with your comprehensive plan?
- I strongly urge you to consider not only the residents but the current businesses there as well as, your emergency response personnel because one of the biggest concerns is a disaster readiness plan or an emergency plan as well as decommissioning but I do understand that those conversations will come subsequently.

Lindsay McIntrye presented a power point presentation which was similar to the one shown at the previous meeting and answering some of the issues that were brought up at the July 28th, 2025 PZB Meeting.

Lindsay McIntrye made the following statements/answered questions:

- Monticello is an MS4 community, which means the City does their own stormwater review. We have to submit a stormwater prevention plan, also known as a SWIP to the City's stormwater engineer. That shows that we cannot cause greater drainage and flow post construction than currently exists. A separate professional engineer has also approved the application. They review internally within their company, making sure these documents are correct and accurate.
- We authorized through the Army Corps nationwide permit number 14 for using the access road and crossing of the riverine. They have personnel that examines the habitat as well as any federally threatened or endangered species on the property. We have also gone through that diligence and we have the letter in hand stating approval for the wetlands crossing culvert upgrade as well as the species. This is a federal level check; however, we also do a state level check.
- Illinois Department of Natural Heritage, they have personnel who look at these sites, they examine

these sites, and we apply to them for review. Their database contains no record of any state-listed threatened or endangered species on or adjacent to the property.

- Illinois Department of Natural Resources has given us a letter stating no impact to surrounding archaeological or historic sites in the area of Monticello.

- We do provide a surety bond when applying for a permit to show proof of that bond to decommission the site.

- The glare study shows no impact because there is existing, tree line, there's a fence, and by the time the sun hits that portion of the panels, there's no glare going into their homes, which was approved by a certified engineer. The glare study does take into account seasonal elements, so it does show a full year.

- Noise on the solar site has been in question, we have two pads in the central parts of the site. Those contain inverter pads that are converting a direct current of electricity, DC current, to an alternating current to make it usable on the lines. Those are the only components that will have any noise. When they're fully operational, really peak production is around 1 p.m. they going to emit 60 decibels, which is the sound of a household air conditioning system. When you get to the fence line, the sound is at ambient noise, meaning that you could not decipher the sound of those inverters from just the surrounding nature.

- We use native pollinator friendly seed mix and do trimmings two to three times per year, that is something that the agricultural department of Illinois has approved in their AMA agreement. They have stated they do not want us to trim more than that or less than that.

- Emergency response and fire protection, part of our construction process is working with the local fire department to provide a training once the site is fully installed. These systems are only producing power during sunlight hours, so if there's ever going to be a situation, it's occurring at the inverter box, and there is a way to de-energize that. That's what the training will entail with the local fire department and we've informed the fire chief that we are willing and able to do that at construction.

- In terms of property values, we can put together a study for the city council to provide them with more information regarding that.

- This is this property is located next to the county jail and an industrial area. This is not a type of property that a residence would be built on for Suzanne.

- We are taking trees down to build out that access road in the middle, but the perimeter trees will stay.

Board Member Michael Beem stated the following:

All due respect to the gentleman that brought all the studies about property values and stuff. I went through this at the county level on the wind farms and for every study that shows that says it lowers property values you can find ones that say they don't. There's a Loyola study that was done in October of last year that says that solar farms actually increase property values by one half to two percent. I don't know which is right, and I'm not making a determination one way or the other.

Suzanne Wells made the following statements:

- Spoke with the 11 other individual property/business owners at the bear park subdivision and they are in support of the solar facility.

- With respect to taking quality farmland out of production, when I bought the property in 1999 it was already zoned industrial since 1986 and was planned to be used as an industrial park. It was zoned industrial until 2019 when the zoning was changed to business, due to possibly selling the property. The majority of properties in this area are zoned industrial and I'm asking for the property to revert back to the original zoning of industrial. There was never an indication that this would not

be an appropriate place for a residential subdivision due to only having one road in and one road out. It is currently being farmed but that it's not its highest and best to use. It will be developed in some kind of business capacity.

- The question is, number one, is it appropriate to zone this industrial? And I believe it is since all the neighbors are industrial. It would be consistent with my business neighbors who also signed the petition saying they supported this project.

- Number two is solar an appropriate use on this property and I believe it is. It is the least impactful use you can have of an industrial or even business of any kind. It's virtually silent with no lights and after construction no trucks. There are factories and other businesses in the area that have much more trucks, dust, obviously dangerous chemicals and stuff like that. None of that exists on this property.

- There's been another question about the road going in, that is really part of the permit process that is not a zoning issue.

- Whether the company who is going to run this business on the property has enough insurance. Is not a zoning issue.

- The state law provides a decommissioning cash bond, that is reviewed every five years is put in place at the point of permitting, I think that's one of the good benefits of the statute it provided that framework that's good for the landowners it's good for the community.

- With regard to a permeable structure the solar panels are on stakes and are not a building when looking at drainage. This is something that relates to when you build a building you take that whole piece of property out of the drainage. This is not a permanent building and so that permeable language he was talking about doesn't apply.

- There is a difference between proposed legislation and what is current legislation. Current legislation allows the rezoning and solar facility.

- The property has always been intended for an industrial park which is part of the comprehensive plan.

Board Member Shawn Spillman asked the following:

In 2019 did you make the sale contingent of being able to rezone the property? So, then when that fell through then in 2019, would it have gone back to industrial? Jim Grabarczyk stated that it was believed that the conditional use was approved along with the rezoning, however the company decided against developing it.

With regard to topography are you keeping the same grade or are you building it up? Lindsay McIntyre stated they are keeping the topography as is, the only grading will be done on the access road and where the two electrical pads that hold the inverters.

Board Member Michael Beem stated the following:

The comment made that approving this solar farm is setting precedent for everybody to then build a solar farm. Each solar farm is reviewed individually and has to go through the approval process. This isn't breaking new ground to have a solar farm in a size of Monticello; there are numerous cities our size or smaller in our area that have them.

State Representative Regan Deering stated the following:

I wasn't giving an indication that you were setting precedent. I was just referencing, the control that's been taken away from the county according to state legislation and that you are in a unique position being a municipality you do still have the authority to do as you please.

After further discussion a motion was made by Michael Beem, seconded by Chad Johnson, to approve the Rezoning and Conditional Use Permit Allowing Ground Mounted Solar Array on a parcel currently zoned B – Business at the property commonly known as 1215 Raymond Rd Monticello, IL. The motion passed 5-1.

A motion was made by Michael Beem, and seconded by Will Pontious, to adjourn the meeting at 8:14pm.

Respectfully Submitted by:

Robin Throneburg
City Clerk