

From: [Russell J Mueller](#)
To: [Mark Taylor](#); [Wanda Parrish](#); [Patrick White](#); rstreet@spotsylvania.va.gov; ttignor@spotsylvania.va.gov; [Karl Holsten](#)
Subject: Recommended Amendments to Spotsylvania County's Comprehensive Plan
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Given the upcoming May 22nd BOS meeting to consider changes to the Comprehensive Plan, please find below several suggested amendments we think are necessary to prevent the sPower site from expanding and to give greater guidance to all parties concerned. Thanks for your kind consideration! You may contact me at anytime.

Russ Mueller
Rmueller540@comcast.net
703-627-9767

Recommended Amendments to Spotsylvania County's Comprehensive Plan from Concerned Citizens of Fawn Lake and Spotsylvania County

After reviewing the proposed changes to the Comprehensive Plan, we think the amendment to Chapter 2 Land Use portion of CPA17-0003 - Comprehensive Plan Amendment (Renewable Energy) is a necessary addition to the Plan to take into account the unique challenges presented by renewable energy projects.

The new paragraph under Land Use reads "9. Renewable energy generation facilities, such as solar, geothermal, or wind, should be sited and designed to minimize detrimental impacts to neighboring properties, uses, and roadways."

We think the definition of "detrimental impact" can and should be improved to give the Board, Commission, staff and the public greater clarity and guidance in assessing renewable energy projects, particularly sizable ones that span hundreds of acres.

Culpepper has a general statement in their policy: Size and scale of any renewable energy facility should be strongly considered in order to preserve the county's viewshed and character.

We think further clarity by adding at the end of paragraph 9 the following would receive strong support from Spotsylvania citizens:

"The size and scale of any renewable energy facility should be strongly considered in order to preserve the county's viewshed and character. Detrimental impacts, including but not limited to air, water, soil and noise pollution, wear and tear on roadways and bridges, visual unsightliness, potential harm to individuals and the environment must be addressed and mitigated before a project may proceed."

In addition, include an amendment to the renewable energy Comprehensive Plan similar to what other counties have or are contemplating that would:

- a. Establish minimum distances between one renewable energy facility and another to limit local impacts; especially given that the sPower site will leave similarly sized agricultural parcels contiguous to sPower; and
- b. Limit total acreage of renewable energy projects to a reasonable percentage of Spotsylvania County's jurisdiction.

Additional Topics for Discussion & Inclusion in Comprehensive Plan or County Code:

How much land does the County want to allow to be used for renewable energy power generation facilities?

sPower indicates that their 500 MW solar power plant will power 82,000 homes annually.

This is about twice as many homes as there are in Spotsylvania County.

It will cover 2.4% of the land in the County.

Do we want to become the solar power plant for northern Virginia?

What are the appropriate limitations on size and proximity for these types of facilities?

Some jurisdictions are placing limitations on both size and locations.

Some jurisdictions are limiting the maximum acreage for each facility (e.g. 1000 acres).

Halifax County amended their solar ordinance in Feb. 2018 to restrict a new solar facility within a 5 mile radius from an existing solar facility to 2.5% of the land in that 5 mile radius (decreased from 5% in original ordinance).

Link to web page with both the solar ordinance and the new amendment:

http://www.halifaxcountyva.gov/index.asp?Type=B_BASIC&SEC={3466C157-4019-45EA-95DA-F9E74A535543}

Since the Comprehensive Plan is a high level vision statement, then how will the County establish policies, guidelines and minimum standards to govern commercial renewable energy power generation facilities?

Will general policy statements provide enough guidance, and will be binding?

Culpeper County recently enacted a Policy statement for solar power facilities. We understand from residents in Culpeper that the Planning Commission is already deviating from those guidelines for projects currently being developed.

What is the plan to strengthen and expand the County Code to provide minimum requirements for commercial renewable energy power projects (solar, wind, geo-thermal)?

Existing building codes are inadequate for these facilities. For example, minimum requirements for setbacks, visual and sound buffers, environmental protections during construction and operation, ongoing monitoring during operation, decommissioning and site restoration, etc., should be defined. Additional requirements can be added during the Special Use Permit process, as needed. Similarly, variances can be allowed, as needed.

Consider partnering with other Counties in Virginia and State agencies to create a template for ordinances covering utility scale solar energy facilities. This leverages experience and creates common minimum standards across the Commonwealth.

These minimum standards will provide better clarity for businesses considering building one of these facilities in Spotsylvania County.

Virginia HB 508 makes roof-mounted solar facilities to provide electricity for that building a "by-right" use in all agricultural, residential, commercial, industrial, institutional and mixed use districts. It also allows ground mounted solar panels to be installed to provide power for a building "unless a local ordinance provides otherwise". The effective date was delayed until Jan. 1, 2019 to allow localities additional time to make any desired changes to local ordinances.

For example, a senior housing unit was built in Culpeper (located off Ira Hoffman Lane, on Northridge Blvd across from Culpeper High School). It was built with a ½ acre solar farm, much to the surprise of the County and the neighbors. Adequate setbacks and screening were not provided.

How will the County prepare for these small ground mounted solar arrays?

Do we want to allow a renewable energy power plant to be built on any commercially zoned land?

Is this consistent with the Comprehensive Plan to develop the County in certain corridors?

For example, if one of the car dealerships on Rt. 1 goes out of business, does the County want a solar power plant or a wind power plant being built there instead?

Should renewable energy power plants be restricted to non-productive agricultural land?

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