

COUNTY OF ALBEMARLE

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

<p>PROJECT NAMES: SP202100001 Midway Solar</p> <p>SUBJECT/PROPOSAL/REQUEST: Solar-energy electrical generation facility including an approximately 8 megawatt photovoltaic system and 4 megawatt battery energy storage system occupying approximately 80 acres. The proposed project is adjacent to the Batesville Agricultural Forestal District</p> <p>STAFF CONTACT: Scott Clark, Bill Fritz</p>	<p>AGENDA DATE: March 16, 2021</p> <p>ATTACHMENTS: Yes</p>
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BACKGROUND:

The subject property (Tax Map 85 Parcel 17B) is a 136-acre parcel located on Craigs Store Road (Route 635), adjacent to the Batesville Agricultural/Forestal District (see Attachment A). The adjacent District parcels are Tax Map 85 Parcel 3, 3A, 3A1, and 17.

The special use permit application requests 8 megawatt photovoltaic system and 4 megawatt battery energy storage system occupying approximately 80 acres; please note that Attachment B is provided with a hyperlink, rather than as a separate PDF, as it is too large to send by e-mail.) These facilities require a special use permit approval from the Board of Supervisors.

COMMITTEE REVIEW GUIDELINES:

Section 3-202(D) of the Albemarle County Code reads as follows:

D. Consideration of district in taking certain actions. The county shall consider the existence of a district and the purposes of this chapter and Chapter 43 of Title 15.2 of the Virginia Code in its comprehensive plan, ordinances, land use planning decisions, administrative decisions and procedures affecting parcels of land adjacent to the district.

The County's practice has been to consult with the Committee on any special use permit requests located on land adjacent to an existing District.

Those purposes of the Agricultural-Forestal Districts chapter of the County Code are listed in Section 3-100, "Purpose and Intent":

The purpose and intent of this chapter are as follows:

A. It is the policy of county to conserve and protect, and to encourage the development and improvement of, its agricultural and forestal lands for the production of food and other agricultural or forestal products. It is also the policy of the county to conserve and protect agricultural and forestal lands as valued natural and ecological resources which provide essential open spaces for clean airsheds, watershed protection, wildlife habitat, and for aesthetic purposes.

B. It is the purpose and intent of this chapter to provide means by which agricultural and forestal lands of either statewide or local significance may be protected and enhanced as a viable segment of state and local economies, and as important economic and environmental resources.

The Committee's role is to assist the Board of Supervisors by commenting on any possible impacts to the Batesville District from the proposed use. The Committee's review should directly address Agricultural-Forestal District impacts. Other aspects of the review, such as visibility of the facility, impacts on the Batesville Historic District, etc., will be addressed in staff's report to the Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors.

The Committee's recommendation will be included in staff's reports to the Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors when public hearings are held for this item.

DISCUSSION:

Section 3-101 of the County Code further explains the County policies that the Districts should promote. Staff will address this proposal's impacts on each policy below:

A. Production of food and other agricultural and forestal products. It is the policy of the State and the County to conserve and protect and to encourage the development and improvement of the Commonwealth's agricultural and forestal lands for the production of food and other agricultural and forestal products.

The presence of a solar-energy electrical generation facility on 80 acres of a 136 acre parcel that is outside the District will not limit the capacity of land in the District to produce agricultural or forestal products. Traffic for construction of the facility will not impact Tax Map 85 Parcel 3, 3A, 3A1 because they access Batesville Road and not Craigs Store Road. Traffic impact on Tax Map 85, Parcel 17 (a 5 acre parcel) would be limited to the anticipated 6 month construction window. Traffic to the solar facility after construction is minimal and will not impede farm traffic.

B. Provide essential open spaces. It is also the policy of the State and the County to conserve and protect agricultural and forestal lands as valued natural and ecological resources which provide essential open spaces for clean air sheds, watershed protection, wildlife habitat, as well as for aesthetic purposes.

Open spaces within the district would not be reduced by the creation of a solar-energy electrical generation facility on an adjacent parcel. The district's value for watershed-quality and wildlife-habitat protection would not be impeded by adjacent construction.

C. Strong agricultural and forestal economy. It is the policy of the County to support a strong agricultural and forestal economy.

A solar-energy electrical generation facility on adjacent property does not impede the District's ability to support agricultural or forestal production.

D. Protect and preserve natural resources and retain continuous and unfragmented land. It is the policy of the County to protect and preserve natural resources, which include mountains, hills, valleys, rivers, streams, groundwater, and retain continuous and unfragmented land for agriculture, forestry, biodiversity, and natural resource protection.

Development of the site would not create fragmentation of land ownership or of land cover within the district. Issues associated with the change in use, and ground cover of the subject property, will be evaluated by the Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors during the special use permit review.

RECOMMENDATION:

Physical impacts of the proposed use will be limited to the parcel adjacent to the District and would not impact agricultural resources on land in the District.

Therefore staff recommends that the Committee advise the Board and the Planning Commission that the proposed use does not conflict with the purposes of the Agricultural-Forestal Districts.

ATTACHMENTS:

Attach. A – [Location Map](#)

Attach. B – [Special Use Permit Application.](#)

Attachment A

