

Preserve Rural Land – Community Briefing Summary

WHAT WE KNOW

Background & Timeline

- **2022–2023:** Some land contracts for solar development were initiated.
- **Early 2024:** Landowners sought information from solar development companies Galehead Capital Ventures and Azimuth Renewables and were advised by the commission to retain an attorney.
- **Oct 2025:** Two farms were discovered to be **surrounded** by approximately four square miles of contracted solar ground.

County Actions Identified

- **Aug 27, 2025:** The commission accepted a Chapter 100 counter-offer.
- **Oct 15, 2025:** The commission signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) and Finance Agreement.
- **Jan 2026:** Commissioners stated that these documents were “not binding.”

Advocacy & Legislative Work (Jan–Apr 2026)

- The group testified **five times** before Missouri Senate and House committees.
- The group met with representatives from MDC, DNR, USFWS, EPA, and the Corps of Engineers.
- Agency representatives indicated that their regulatory authority is limited and that key decisions remain primarily at the **state and county** levels.
- Letters were submitted to the editor, and a petition was launched.
- **Note:** The petition remains open for signatures.
- No meaningful statewide standards for solar development were achieved.

Scale of Proposed Development in Chariton and Randolph County

- **Total land secured:** 2,567 acres.
- **Prairie Hill:** 800 acres; Galehead sold the project to Treaty Oak Clean Energy.
- **Diamond Solar:** 1,767 acres; Azimuth, a subsidiary, is associated with NorthStar Clean Energy.
- Diamond Solar would be the **7th or 8th largest solar farm** in Missouri, estimated at 97–115 MW.

Due Diligence & Transparency Concerns

- **Due diligence period:** 2–6 years.
- The due diligence period began when landowners signed lease agreements with solar development companies.
- The dates of the first signed contracts are unknown because the contracts include nondisclosure provisions.
- **MISO interconnection deadlines:** Aug. 28, 2026 (Phase II) and Nov. 28, 2026 (Phase III).
- **Engineering completion:** Expected in Dec. 2026.
- **Environmental studies and draft site layout:** These materials have not been made available to the public.
- **Neighbor impact study:** No study of impacts on neighboring properties has been conducted.

QUESTIONS AND CONCERNS RAISED

Transparency

- **Project disclosure before public hearing:** Will the full site layout, project scope, engineering plans, and related supporting documents be made available to the public before any public hearing?
- **Notice to the community:** Why was the broader community not informed earlier about a proposed bonded project valued at approximately **\$150 million**?
- **Notice to adjacent landowners:** Why have adjacent landowners not been directly contacted about the proposed large-scale solar project, including the reported **2,567 acres** under consideration?
- **Neighbor impact mitigation:** Will Randolph County require an independent environmental impact study to evaluate and mitigate impacts on neighboring properties that are not contracted for solar development, rather than relying solely on information provided by the solar developer?
- **Public input before final action:** Before any Chapter 100 agreement is signed or voted on by the commissioners, will Randolph County residents have a meaningful opportunity to share their views on large-scale solar development, including both support and concerns?

Environmental & Health

- **Independent environmental review:** Will Randolph County require independent environmental assessments, reviewed by qualified public health and environmental officials, rather than relying solely on studies prepared or controlled by the solar developer?

- **Public access to studies:** Will all developer environmental reports, independent studies, draft site layouts, and supporting technical documents be made publicly available before any public hearing or final county action?
- **Water, soil, and wildlife impacts:** What analysis will be conducted to evaluate potential effects on drainage, erosion, groundwater, wetlands, wildlife habitat, and surrounding agricultural land?
- **Public health considerations:** What review will be completed to assess possible health-related concerns for nearby residents, including construction impacts, long-term maintenance, glare, noise, chemical exposure, and emergency response risks?
- **Accountability and mitigation:** If environmental or health impacts are identified, what enforceable mitigation measures, monitoring requirements, and accountability provisions will be required before the project can proceed?

Financial & Legal

- **Fee purpose and allocation:** What is the purpose of the **\$125,000 MOU issuance fee** and the **\$10,000 MAEDC fee**, who receives these funds, and how will they be used?
- **County liability and public benefit:** Why would Randolph County accept potential liability or financial exposure through a Chapter 100 arrangement if the project results in limited or no traditional property taxation?
- **PILT reliability and enforcement:** What happens to payments in lieu of taxes (PILT) if the project stops producing power, the developer sells the project, enters bankruptcy, or otherwise fails to meet its obligations?
- **Taxpayer protections:** What safeguards will be included to ensure county taxpayers, school districts, emergency services, and other local entities are not left responsible for unpaid costs, legal disputes, or project-related liabilities?
- **Decommissioning and financial assurance:** What legally enforceable decommissioning plan, bond, escrow, or other financial assurance will be required to guarantee cleanup, equipment removal, and land restoration at the end of the project or if the developer fails?

Safety & Emergency Response

- **Fire protection setbacks:** What fire protection setbacks will be required from homes, property lines, roads, wooded areas, fields, substations, battery storage systems, and other sensitive areas?
- **Emergency response planning:** Will a detailed emergency response plan be required before approval, including procedures for solar panel fires, battery fires, electrical hazards, severe weather damage, and hazardous material incidents?

- **Training and equipment for responders:** What specialized training, equipment, and protocols will local rural fire departments, emergency medical services, and law enforcement need to safely respond to incidents at the project site?
- **Cost responsibility:** Who will pay for any required upgrades to rural fire departments, emergency response equipment, training, water access, access roads, or other public safety needs created by the project?
- **Site access and coordination:** How will emergency responders access the site during fires, floods, storms, or other emergencies, and who will be responsible for maintaining access roads, gates, mapping, signage, and contact information?
- **Ongoing accountability:** What enforceable requirements will ensure emergency response plans, training, equipment, and contact information remain current throughout construction, operation, ownership changes, and decommissioning?

Neighbor & Land Protections

- **Setbacks and buffers:** What minimum setbacks and buffer zones will be required from homes, property lines, roads, wetlands, wildlife habitat, streams, ponds, wells, and other water sources?
- **Protection of non-participating neighbors:** What enforceable standards will protect neighboring landowners who have not signed solar leases or easements from visual impacts, noise, glare, drainage changes, construction traffic, trespass, and loss of quiet enjoyment?
- **Drainage, erosion, and land use impacts:** How will the project prevent damage to neighboring farms, fields, fences, roads, waterways, and drainage systems during construction, operation, and decommissioning?
- **Screening and visual mitigation:** Will vegetative screening, fencing standards, maintenance requirements, and other visual protections be required and enforced throughout the life of the project?
- **Damage claims and liability:** Who will be legally responsible for property damage, crop loss, livestock impacts, road damage, contamination, cleanup, or other losses affecting neighboring landowners?
- **Long-term land restoration:** What enforceable requirements will ensure equipment removal, soil restoration, cleanup, and return of the land to a safe and usable condition at the end of the project or if the developer fails?

INFORMATION STILL NEEDED (Critical Gaps)

- ☐ Full site layout, project scope, engineering plans, and supporting technical documents.

- ☐ Developer-prepared environmental studies, independent environmental assessments, and independent public health review.
- ☐ Written analysis of impacts on non-participating neighboring landowners.
- ☐ Decommissioning plan and legally enforceable financial assurance details, including bond, escrow, or other cleanup guarantee.
- ☐ Fire protection requirements, emergency response plan, responder training needs, equipment needs, and public safety cost estimates.
- ☐ Setback, buffer, screening, drainage, and neighbor-protection standards.
- ☐ Written explanation of Chapter 100 fees, county liability, PILT risks, and taxpayer protections.
- ☐ Public hearing date, notice process, and confirmation that full project details will be available before any final county action.