

Solar Development Pause for Study

The public still does not have a clear understanding of what agreements exist or are pending, and what obligations the county may already be assuming. Before any commissioner signs the remaining Chapter 100 documents or not, the citizens of Randolph County deserve full transparency and full disclosure. I am asking the Commission to pause (temporary moratorium) all further action on Chapter 100 until the following project issues are addressed openly, formally, and with full public participation.

On 9 January, I was told by the commission that in December 2025 the taxing authorities and specifically the fire district was informed to study the project impacts. In April or May I learned the fire district had no such direction to prepare. Yesterday I learned the assessor in his words “had no knowledge”. On 30 July the presiding commissioner notified only 3 citizens of this meeting today and asked that we “notify other interested parties”. How do county residents know to be interested when the commission has made little effort to inform folks or county staff of a pending \$150 million project, and have signed some of the chapter 100 documents without any notification or solicitation of input. No transparency!

1. Temporary Moratorium

Missouri counties have enacted temporary moratoria on large-scale solar, battery-storage, and data-center projects to allow time for proper study. Randolph County has not yet done so. A moratorium would give the county time to evaluate long-term impacts, draft appropriate ordinances, and ensure decisions are made with full information rather than developer pressure (who have been working this since 2022/2023).

2. Solar / Storage / Data-Center (non zoning industrial solar ordinance)

Randolph County currently lacks a comprehensive ordinance governing industrial-scale solar arrays, battery-energy storage systems, and data-center infrastructure. Without such an ordinance, the county has no enforceable standards for setbacks, noise, drainage, fencing, fire safety, environmental protection, decommissioning, or financial assurance.

3. Environmental Assessment

The Diamond Solar footprint includes wetlands, floodplain, and wildlife habitat. The county should require its own full environmental assessment that evaluates hydrology, drainage, erosion-control measures, pollutant and sediment-runoff mitigation, and water-quality testing protocols for wells, livestock, and creeks. These impacts will fall on neighboring landowners rather than the developer, making a thorough assessment essential.

4. Public-Health Assessment (public-health solar ordinance)

Missouri statute 192.300 grants counties the power to create local health rules. Industrial solar and battery-storage facilities raise public-health concerns that must be evaluated. Some concerns include noise generated by inverters and tracking motors, heat-island effects, glare, air-quality risks associated with battery fires, stormwater contamination, and potential impacts on rural drinking-water sources. A comprehensive public-health assessment is necessary.

5. Rural Fire Strategy

Battery-storage fires are extremely difficult to extinguish and can burn for extended periods. Rural fire departments are not currently equipped or trained to manage lithium-ion thermal-runaway events. The county must determine what equipment is required, what training is necessary, how much of both will be funded, what emergency-response plans will be implemented, and whether adequate water supplies exist for fire suppression. A fire-response strategy must be established and funding planned before the project is approved.

6. Rural Water Supply

Large-scale solar construction and battery-storage facilities require water for dust control, cooling, and emergency response. The county must evaluate how these demands will affect rural water districts, well capacity, aquifer drawdown, and emergency water-supply availability for fire events. Taxation implications.

7. County Liability

If the county signs Chapter 100 documents, it becomes the legal owner of the project for tax-abatement purposes. This raises serious questions about liability, including who is responsible for environmental damage, who bears responsibility for fire, contamination, or structural failure, and what happens if the developer defaults or dissolves. These questions must be answered publicly before any agreement is signed.

8. Wildlife Preservation, Critical Habitat & MDC Review

The project area includes wetlands, riparian corridors, migratory-bird habitat, and potential endangered or threatened species. The adjacent Prairie Hill Solar Project (800 acres) received two Missouri Department of Conservation Natural Heritage Review reports, which identified sensitive species, critical habitat, and MDC's recommended one-mile setback from conservation areas such as Thomas Hill. Despite the Diamond Solar Project covering 1,767 acres — including creeks, ponds, bottomland woods, floodplain, forest, prairie habitat, and land within the MDC one-mile setback — no MDC Natural Heritage Review has been provided.

9. Noise Abatement

Industrial solar facilities generate continuous inverter noise and mechanical tracking noise. Setbacks must be based on actual decibel measurements rather than developer assurances.

10. Erosion, Pollutants, Silting & Water Quality

Construction on thousands of acres will alter hydrology and increase erosion, sediment loading, pollutants, and silting in creeks and ponds. The county must require water-quality testing for wells, livestock, and surface water to ensure that rural residents are not harmed by runoff or contamination.

11. Public Financing & Long-Term Costs

Chapter 100 agreements shift tax burdens from developers to citizens. Before signing any agreement, the county must disclose long-term revenue impacts, infrastructure costs, road-use impacts, emergency-response costs, and administrative burdens, liability insurance. Citizens deserve a full financial analysis before any commitments are made from all taxing authorities.

12. Hunting Heritage

Randolph County has a long tradition of hunting, wildlife management, and rural land stewardship. Industrial fencing, habitat loss, and land fragmentation threaten that heritage and must be considered before approving large-scale development.

13. Road Use & Easements

Is Azimuth, Northstar a public utility? What road and easement usage are they authorized if any? Construction traffic, heavy equipment, and long-term maintenance will affect county roads. The county must require road-use agreements, damage-repair provisions, weight-limit compliance, and full transparency regarding easements.

14. Comprehensive Decommissioning Plan & Funding

Regardless of any Chapter 100, the county must require a comprehensive decommissioning plan supported by guaranteed financial assurance. This includes a third-party cost estimate and a bond or escrow account sufficient to cover full removal and land restoration consistent with inflation. Decommissioning must be funded up front and enforceable. Post the Table Rock Solar Project decommissioning plan that was to be reviewed at the 24 June public hearing before it was postponed.

15. CPA-Audited Fiscal Impact Report (from all taxing authorities and government offices)

Before any Chapter 100 or project approval, the county must require a written, CPA-audited fiscal impact report detailing the financial effects of the Diamond Solar Project with or without public financing. This report must include revenue changes for each taxing authority and a formal statement from the Randolph County Assessor regarding long-term tax impacts, land-use changes, and valuation consequences.

Closing Statement

I respectfully request that the Commission pause all Chapter 100 actions until the requested records are produced and reviewed; hold public hearings on each of the issues listed above not a developer open house; develop a comprehensive ordinance before signing any remaining Chapter 100 documents; require a complete decommissioning plan and guaranteed funding; require a CPA-audited fiscal impact report from all taxing authorities and the assessor; and explain why the Diamond Solar Project lacks an MDC Natural Heritage Review.

Thank you for your time and attention.

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