

# **Pipestone County Board of Adjustments**

## **Variance Public Hearing Minutes**

Thursday, August 28, 2025

Board members present:, Curt Johnson, Travis Dethlefs, and Dan Miller

Absent: Tom Bobendrier

Others present: Emily Neuharth, Nikki Miller, Jerry Remund, Deb Schroyer, Justin Schroyer, Tony Remund, Jim and Kim Morgan, Mark and Marci Mahik, Dave and Jan Muller, Kyle Kuphal, and Kyle Krier

Johnson called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m.

Minutes of the July 16, 2025, meeting were reviewed. Motion by Miller seconded by Dethlefs to approve minutes as printed, motion passed.

Johnson then opened the public hearing on the request by Pivot Energy MN Solar 24 LLC (Jerry Leigh Remund Trust) to construct a solar garden less than the 400-foot setback from the nearest non-participating dwelling. The proposed site is located in the South half of the Northeast quarter of Section 11, Sweet Township (T-106-N, R-46-W) Pipestone County.

Neuharth explained that they are requesting a variance to construct a 1-megawatt solar garden. This will be a community solar specific to low/med income levels, project will power about 200 homes and the landowner chooses to install solar as his future income which is his right as a landowner and therefore feels the variance request of a setback of 150 to the nearest neighbor is a undue hardship. Johnson asked how many acres site would be. It will be 6.35 Neuharth replied. She continued to explain that studies have been done that show that a setback of 150' have no impact to neighbors or property values. Site has 3 phase line that is close and the local sub has the capacity for solar. City of Pipestone has 150' setback and many other county do to. Ground cover will be native prairie and flowers. Johnson asked if area would be fenced. Yes there will be 10' fence around area. Lease is for 25 years with the potential for 3 extensions for a total of 40 years. Johnson asked if there were any public comments? Mark Mahik said he supports solar but not in his back yard and value could drop 4%. Jim Morgan spoke of the 2015 hearing with PUC on solar project for same area and they concluded that solar was to close to homes and would change the aesthetics of the neighborhood. Justin Schroyer said the City does not support the granting of variance as it would impact R1 and R2 development. Deb Schroyer said solar gardens have weed issues. Jerry Remund said owned land since 1970, was going to plat but to expensive. Dave Muller said solar would destroy view. Jim Morgan said maybe 150' setback would be ok but not with elevation differences we have here. Marci Mahiks said more research needs to be done on health effects and market value studies. Jan Muller supports the neighbor's opposition to project. Tony Remund said school had a wind tower and there were not issues we could also build storage shed and put panels on roofs so really no difference. Neuharth said studies show no property value impacts, panels have less glare than grass or asphalt, and these are pivoting panels so even less glare. US solar does great job with seeing. There are already transmission lines onsite so view shed is already impaired. North view will not be impacted. Letters were mailed to all neighbors about a month ago and no one replied.

Johnson then asked if there were any other comments, hearing none the public hearing was closed at 6:28.

The board then went through the findings of fact questions:

1. Yes, solar is allowed in district
2. No, still able to farmland
3. Yes, proximity to City
4. No, New proposed solar
5. Yes, Solar would restrict development

6. Yes

Following Discussion, Motion was made by Miller to deny the variance for the following reasons: restrict development in area, proximity to residents, and it would alter the character of the area locality. Dethlefs seconded the motion. Motion passed

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 6:38 p.m.

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Curt Johnson, Board Chairman

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Kyle Krier, Pipestone County Zoning Administrator