



MAYOR
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Rationale for Requested Modifications to Wells County Solar Ordinance Amendments

The City of Bluffton supports the Wells County Area Plan Commission's objective of preserving agricultural land, protecting rural character, and addressing citizen concerns related to large-scale industrial solar development. At the same time, the City has a responsibility to protect long-term electric reliability and affordability for its residents and businesses.

Bluffton owns and operates a municipal electric utility and purchases its power on the open market. Projected power cost increases over the next decade require prudent long-term planning and risk management to protect local ratepayers.

As currently written, portions of the proposed ordinance may unintentionally prohibit modest, locally controlled, community-serving solar projects that exist solely to serve municipal utilities and their customers. This outcome appears broader than the Commission's stated intent to restrict large-scale industrial solar development on agricultural land.

The City's proposed clarifications (attached) are intentionally narrow. They preserve all setbacks, buffering, screening, and scale limitations, prohibit wholesale or merchant power generation, and emphasize local control and direct ratepayer benefit. These provisions ensure that industrial-scale solar remains restricted while avoiding unintended long-term impacts on municipal utilities.

The City of Bluffton respectfully submits these limited modifications to support balanced planning, fiscal stewardship, and long-term protection for Wells County residents.

Scott Mentzer