

**COMMISSIONER MEETING
SPECIAL SESSION
October 6, 2025
6:30 PM**

ATTENDANCE:	
COMMISSIONERS:	Rick Woodall, President Tom Helmer, Vice President Andy Beck
ATTORNEY:	Jim Ensley
AUDITOR'S OFFICE	Kristina Berish
AUDIENCE:	285 Individuals signed in

The Putnam County Board of Commissioners met on October 6, 2025, at 6:30 PM in special session. The meeting was held at the Putnam County Fairgrounds. Woodall opened the meeting and the pledge to the flag was given.

4LEAF SOLAR

Beck went over the rules for the meeting: Petitioner 4Leaf Solar 25 minutes, Mann family attorney 25 minutes, Laureen White attorney 25 minutes, Eddie Felling 25 minutes, Petitioner 15 minutes rebuttal. Commissioners can interject questions/comments at any time. Beck made the motion to accept those rules for tonight. Helmer seconded. The motion passed unanimously. Woodall made the motion to accept materials from the September 11, 2025 meeting. Beck seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

4Leaf Solar – Paul Cummins with energyRE

They are seeking A1 to Natural Resources on rezoning. This will be subject to conditions and commitments. Conditions are binding. Looking to exclude 500 acres from the project, these areas would not be used but maintain them as they are. If successful tonight with the rezone, they would get a new survey. Cummins went over their nine commitments. 1) no mining 2) decommissioning 3) road use agreement 4) donor advisement 2.4M to community foundation (minimum of 50K annual) 5) grazing and topsoil preservation 6) wildlife study and population impact 7) well head study 8) 250 foot step back for neighborhood 9) binding on neighbor commitment.

Beck had several questions:

- 1) page 218 of affidavit, read the section. Does this mean buying the land from the Mann family. Substation there is a lease and a purchase option. Substation parcel is the only option to purchase. Beck said the way he read this parcel would then be sold to Duke? Cummins said yes, the 5 acres would be sold to Duke as required.
- 2) Battery storage - Cummins said they don't have a battery agreement. But yes, they could according to page 222 affidavit. They don't have a way to permit storage so they would be looking for rezones. They were not asking for it at this time. Should they ever need it, they would need to come before the county for approval.

- 3) It says there will be jobs while under construction for 18 months for 1,200 employees. But once completed, it will drop to 4 to 5 employees. Cummins said that was correct.
- 4) Why are there a lot of engineers for the project coming from out-of-state. Because of the type of work they are doing, most of the engineers with this background are not in Indiana.
- 5) With all these temporary workers coming into the county, would this going to make the county need to hire more Sheriff deputies. Cummins said that is a question for the Sheriff. And what about where would these workers stay during the 18-month construction period. Would this hurt businesses in the area that have events that people need hotel, but they would be full due to this project. Cummins said that is something that the county would need to research and project what they wanted to do.
- 6) Questioned the acreage per solar. Cummins explained the process.
- 7) Environmental impact – would homeowners have a difference in utilities. Cummins said it would be minimal, a degree or two.
- 8) How often would the drainage flow be evaluated. Cummins said they would establish vegetation the year before for drainage. They do not believe there would be a problem.
- 9) Would the company be paying for soil and water study to have a baseline. Cummins said they would be happy to provide one.
- 10) Questioned the proposed buffers. Cummins said they have requirements to meet but they would be open to discussing adding different buffers such as evergreens.
- 11) The need for specific firefighting training. Would the company be providing this? Yes, they would provide annual training.
- 12) Would they be looking at all 170 homes to make sure they would not have a water issue. Cummins said they would be looking at the large wells and have well testing.
- 13) How can you prove that property values would not go down. They can only go by their studies. The midwestern farm study shows there should not be a problem.
- 14) If they sold the property would the new owner be bound by the commitments made by the solar company. Cummins said the new owner would have to come before the county to deviate otherwise they would be bound by the same commitments.
- 15) Questioned the property tax section. The Commissioners have recently attended a conference and given more information on how the SB1 would project out. Cummins said the schools are projected by 2031 to be experiencing shortfalls.
- 16) Since the company is looking to remove 500 acres now, can they continue tonight's proceedings. Cummins said yes through the condition documents.

Woodall said his questions were sent out to all parties before the meeting.

- 1) Where would the panels come from. They would be assembled in the US. Woodall wanted it clarified if that included all the parts. Cummins said in Jeffersonville IN there is currently a company under construction that they will get the panels from.
- 2) The first study took 3 years. When are you looking to have a signed contract. Cummins said they were looking to have it signed in 2026.

- 3) Would the good neighbor agreements still be valid if they sold it to another company. Yes, Cummins said they would still be upheld. Woodall asked how the payments would be made. Cummins explained the procedure. So, this would be taxable income? Yes, it would be.
- 4) What is the decommissioning process and cost. Cummins explained the process; it would be different in the future from today's cost. It gets reevaluated every 5 years.
- 5) Page 19 of the agreement regarding the buffers, this would be 100' for property without a home, 250' with a home, and a side buffer is 50'. Cummins said there are standards they must meet. They are willing to talk to individuals about buffers and vegetation.
- 6) Asked about the unrestricted endowment fund. The company has already contributed \$12,500 to the community foundation; more would be donated in future years.
- 7) Would every parcel have animals on it. They could not commit to every parcel. The owners would have first rights.
- 8) Has there been a study to see how this project would impact sheep. Yes, and they have seen it done with great success.
- 9) The consumer price index could go up or down, with no guarantees. Cummins said that is correct.
- 10) What would happen if the solar company went bankrupt? The commitment will always be enforceable.

Beck asked what prevents the solar company from going to the bank and buying a property owners mortgage. Cummins said that is a practice they have never done.

Woodall said he was concerned about what happened with the commitments with SB1 continuing to change. Could the commitments be altered. Felling said if changed it does not change the minimum amount of taxes the company would pay. The company calculated their commitment before SB1 was enacted.

Woodall asked if this project is voted down, will the company take the county to court. Cummins said they would have to look at their options.

Helmer asked if the tax credit was going to have an impact on the program. Cummins said they have a window to have it going by 2030 to have the credit. They are doing their best to qualify.

Mann family attorney – no comments. No questions for them.

Laureen White attorney – represents the remonstrators. The remonstrators are asking Helmer to recuse himself since he has a relationship with the Mann family. They asked if this would give responsible growth and development to the county. White gave reasons as to why they feel the project is not in the best interest of the county. The comprehensive plan states the farmland preservation is one of the top items of concern of the constituents. It is felt the farmland is a

needed resource to feed the population. We can't afford to lose farmland. She represents the Gaston family. She showed a picture of before and after aerial and it shows the panels on all four sides of their property.

White said it is not true of the statement of it is my property and I can do what I want to with it. Zoning is there to protect the land use regulation. Page 288 of the county's UDO, a property owner can file a lawsuit if they feel a nuisance has been created. Solar should not be competing with farmland.

White said if this is approved the property owner will appeal their assessed values. They feel the property value will decrease.

Denise Spooner stated since 2019 she has helped communities when there is a project looking to come into their county like this. She has helped in the courtroom to get the Judge to decide in the homeowner's favor. This was done in Pulaski County and Tipton County for example. For this project, 114 homes would be impacted. This does not include the homes in the Town of Cloverdale. Spooner gave information how it would impact the value of property.

Woodall asked what Spooner's opinion was regarding the percentage of loss to a homeowner if this project went through. Spooner said it would vary since you have one homeowner that would be surrounded on all four sides, then it went from owners that would have it on three sides, two sides, one side, and then in proximity. Woodall asked if the good neighbor payments made up for the loss. Spooner said it does not.

Woodall if this project does not go through, is the group against anything that would come through there? Even with a smaller footprint. The solar takes a much larger footprint. They are against taking farmland, look at property that is already taken by a warehouse etc.

Woodall asked if there is anywhere that has had solar for 30-40 years and see the impact. No, there is not any. The closest is a professor that is a soil scientist, and he has documented how he felt it would impact the land. Woodall said then we are only looking at studies and not actual land that has been decommissioned.

Woodall asked if this project is approved, will you take the county to court. White said clients are fully prepared to file.

Eddie Felling attorney – behalf of rural preservation society. Asked for everyone in attendance opposed to stand. Majority stood up.

Felling had a list of questions he stated to the audience. He felt the company had three years to prepare for this, and yet they have not provided the Commissioners, the community with information he felt they should have when presenting this type of project. Felling went over items he felt should have done and information they should have provided. He stated it was wrong to ask for a project to be approved and then figure out the details later.

Felling read a letter from a landowner where kids over cash. Protect the kids' future.

Woodall asked if the county approved this tonight, would they sue. To which Felling replied, "Hell yeah."

Woodall asked Felling's opinion of the neighbor payments. Felling asked what the total investment would be. He was told 400M for construction costs. Felling said \$500 was not fair, it was a slap in the face.

Woodall do you agree with White and Spooner. Felling would venture to say it is ludicrous to say it will not negatively impact property value.

Felling said he understands people want to do what they want with their land. However, zoning was put into place for a reason. And he thinks they have given them ample reasons to deny the request before them.

Petitioner rebuttal – Cummins stated a solar farm diversified the Mann property. It is a viable enterprise. No, they do not have all the details hammered out yet because this is a three-year process. Tonight is just about the rezoning request. And their request meets the standards of the ordinance. They have gone above and beyond on their commitments. A lot more than what other solar projects have given. This is only the beginning of the process, and they want to be good neighbors. They have had the concerns tonight and if the rezone request is approved, they will take all of these into consideration for the project.

Cummins understands the concern for property value to go down. But everything in the studies that have been done shows a marginal decrease. They have not seen anything of a devaluation of 20-30% that had been discussed tonight.

Cummins felt they needed to look at the future of Putnam County. And look at everyone as a whole and not just the people that are here tonight. The money from this project could really help the county. The project checks all the boxes for the rezone. It would be one of the largest private owner investments in the county's history. And it follows the UDO to the letter.

Beck disagreed, he does not see this as something that would be good for the county, nor does he see that it would be a good choice for the future of this county.

Woodall asked Planning Director Lisa Zeiner to define what would happen if denied or approved tonight. If denied, the petitioner can submit a petition in the next year. Or if they significantly reduce it, they can come back in the next 3-6 months. If approved, there is still a lot that would have to be gone through for the project to be approved. Tonight is only for the rezoning.

Beck feels there are too many unknowns. Farmland is our economic future. This is something to protect for our kids, grandkids, and great grandkids and so forth. He also did not feel the board should go against the Plan Commission recommendation of denying the request. When he and his fellow Commissioner ran for election, they both said they were against solar. He planned to stand behind that statement, and he hoped his fellow elected official would do the same.

Helmer appreciated everyone coming out tonight. He said they changed his mind. Helmer made a motion to deny case 2025-RZ-061. Beck seconded. Woodall opposed. The motion passed. Woodall called for a vote: Helmer and Beck denied the request to rezone. Woodall was in favor. The request was denied with a vote of 2 to 1.

Public comments, letters, and emails received after September 11, 2025 through tonight's meeting will be acknowledged as part of the record for tonight's meeting.

If you want the full livestreaming version of the meeting, please go to Putnam County Government YouTube Information:

Public YouTube Channel link - <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCNI80fceQ-8gUHQV-MrtEUw>

ADJOURN

Woodall made the motion to adjourn. Helmer seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Rick Woodall, President

Tom Helmer, Vice President

Andy Beck

**Attest: Auditor's Office
Kristina Berish**