

Approved

**Village of Gurnee
Planning and Zoning Board Minutes
November 20, 2024**

1. Call to Order and Roll Call

The meeting was called to order at 7:30 p.m.

Planning and Zoning Board Members Present: Chairman James Sula, Todd Campbell, Roneida Martin, Dane Morgan, David Nordentoft, Edwin Paff, and Liliana Ware

Planning and Zoning Members Absent: none

Other Officials Present: Atrian Fard, Planning Administrator and Gretchen Neddenriep, Acting Village Attorney

2. Pledge of Allegiance

3. Approval of the PZB's October 9, 2024 meeting minutes

Mr. Sula stated that he found some minor errors that he has discussed with Village staff, and that he was provided a red-lined copy with corrections by Ms. Fard; he elaborated that none of the errors he found affect the substance of the minutes. Mr. Sula then asked if there were any other questions or comments from other members of the Board regarding the minutes, and suggested that—if not—a motion to approve as amended would be in order. As there were none, a motion was made.

Mr. Campbell motioned, seconded by Mr. Nordentoft, to approve the minutes, as amended.

Voice Vote:

All "Ayes," no "Nays," none abstaining

Motion Carried: 7-0-0

4. PUBLIC HEARING: Six Flags Great America – 542 N. Route 21 (Milwaukee Avenue)

a) Special Use Permit to allow the installation of ground-mounted solar energy systems as carports in the parking lot

b) Special Use Permit to allow the ground-mounted solar energy systems to exceed the maximum height limit of 15 feet

Ms. Fard introduced the item by stating that Eric Godinez of Solar Optimum HQ, on behalf of Six Flags Great America, is requesting a Special Use Permit to install 40 freestanding ground-mounted solar shade structures within Six Flags' northwest parking lot and a Special Use Permit

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to allow the ground-mounted solar energy systems to exceed the maximum height limit of 15 feet. The proposed structures are designed to function as carports, providing shaded parking while generating renewable energy to support the theme park's operations. Each solar shade structure consists of photovoltaic systems that form the entire roof structure. The PV arrays are mounted on 15.38-foot-tall columns, which are directly attached to the ground. The structures' height measures 22.1 feet at a maximum tilt angle with a minimum vertical clearance of 13.5 feet. The 13.5-foot-clearance is a Fire Code requirement in the parking lots that allows unobstructed access for emergency vehicles, such as fire trucks. The increased height also ensures a safe passage for large vehicles, such as tour buses, recreational vehicles, and delivery and service trucks.

The site is adjacent to residential zoning to the north, east, and south. At the closest points, the solar shades will maintain 770 feet from the residences to the north, 990 feet from the homes to the east, and over 2000 feet to the southern residences. The project meets all other applicable use standards regulating minimum setbacks and restrictions within easements. The petitioner is in attendance to walk the PZB through their request and answer any questions you may have.

As this was a Public Hearing, Mr. Sula asked that all wishing to speak on this matter be sworn in.

Ms. Neddenriep conducted the swearing-in.

Mr. Sula then turned the floor over to the petitioner.

Mr. Godinez introduced himself and expressed thanks for the time to present this request. He explained that the purpose of this project was to decrease costs for electricity, and they are among the highest operating expenses for the theme park. He elaborated that his firm was approached by Six Flags and plans were made to create a 6.4 megawatt solar system for this purpose that would comprise of car ports that would also provide shade and protection from the elements for the vehicles parked underneath them. He then added that this project would employ local labor and resources. Noting that his firm is based in California, Mr. Godinez ended his presentation by noting that they have recently completed a similar project at another Six Flags theme park in Valencia, California.

Mr. Sula asked if there were any questions or comments from the Board.

Mr. Morgan asked how much of the parking lot would be covered by these structures. Ms. Fard noted the maps in the presentation that about 15 acres would be covered; she elaborated with Mr. Sula that this would be about 20-25 percent of the parking lot.

Noting a discrepancy between the paperwork submitted and the verbal presentation, Mr. Nordentoft clarified with Ms. Fard that the maximum height was set at 22.1 to allow for the full tilt of the panels. Mr. Nordentoft clarified with Mr. Godinez that the tilt would be to the south. Mr. Nordentoft then asked what potential effects these panels may have on nearby residents.

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Mr. Godinez replied that during site surveys for the project, it was found that the tree line prevented any real impact to residents from this project.

Ms. Martin asked how many parking spots would be covered, and if any parking spaces would be lost because of this installation. Mr. Godinez answered that no spaces would be lost, but Ms. Fard noted that there may be minimal loss of spaces due to structures holding up the panels.

Ms. Ware asked about maintenance to the structures. Mr. Godinez replied that the structures will be inspected by a third, contracted party that will own and operate the system and will inspect it about every four to six months.

Mr. Campbell asked how long the anti-glare coating on panels will last. Mr. Godinez answered that they last for the life of the panels which is about 25 to 30 years.

Mr. Paff asked how security would be maintained; Mr. Godinez replied that cameras will be under the carports, and—as he clarified with Mr. Sula—there will also be lighting.

Mr. Morgan confirmed that there are no known health risks associated with the use of these panels.

Mr. Sula then opened the floor to the public.

After being sworn-in and explained the procedure for addressing inquiries from the public, Sandra Eanes, of 1039 Bough Court, asked how these structures would be affected by severe weather such as hail. Mr. Sula then closed the floor to the public, and asked Mr. Godinez to address Ms. Eanes' question. Mr. Godinez replied that these structures are impact-resistant, and that setting the panels at the optimal tilt aids in this by preventing build-up and snow and such.

At this time, Mr. Sula asked if there were any more questions or comments from the Board, and suggested that—if not—a motion would be in order.

Mr. Morgan, seconded by Mr. Paff, motioned to forward a favorable recommendation on the petition of Eric Godinez of Solar Optimum HQ, on behalf of Six Flags Great America, for a Special Use Permit to allow ground-mounted solar energy systems as carports at 542 N. Route 21, in substantial conformance with the attached plans and testimony provided to the Planning & Zoning Board on November 20, 2024.

Roll call vote:

Ayes: Campbell, Martin, Morgan, Nordentoft, Paff, Ware, and Sula

Nays: None

Abstain: None

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Motion carried: 7-0-0

Mr. Morgan then, seconded by Mr. Campbell, motioned to forward a favorable recommendation on the petition of Eric Godinez of Solar Optimum HQ, on behalf of Six Flags Great America, for a Special Use Permit to allow ground-mounted solar energy systems to exceed the maximum height limit of 15 feet by 7.1 feet at 542 N. Route 21, in substantial conformance with the attached plans and testimony provided to the Planning & Zoning Board on November 20, 2024.

Roll call vote:

Ayes: Campbell, Martin, Morgan, Nordentoft, Paff, Ware, and Sula

Nays: None

Abstain: None

Motion carried: 7-0-0

Mr. Sula then advised the petitioner of the next steps to follow, and wished good luck with the project.

5. 2025 Planning and Zoning Board Schedule and Time

Mr. Sula assured that all Board members were made aware that copies of a revised schedule were placed at their seats this evening that is to replace the one included in their packets.

Mr. Sula then asked Ms. Fard if staff had anything else to add; staff did not.

Mr. Sula then asked the Board members if they had any issues with either the dates of any scheduled minutes or the proposed change in time the meetings would start. None of the members expressed any issues, so a motion was made at this time.

Mr. Campbell, seconded by Mr. Nordentoft motioned to approve the 2025 PZB meeting schedule and change the meeting start time to 7:00 PM.

Roll call vote:

Ayes: Campbell, Martin, Morgan, Nordentoft, Paff, Ware, and Sula

Nays: None

Abstain: None

Motion carried: 7-0-0

6. Next Meeting Date: December 4, 2024

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Ms. Fard stated that there are no items scheduled at this time.

7. Public Comment

Mr. Sula opened the floor to the public. As there was no one in the audience wishing to speak on anything else, he then closed the floor to the public.

8. Adjournment

Mr. Campbell motioned, seconded by Mr. Nordentoft, to adjourn the meeting.

Voice vote:

All "ayes," no "nays, and none abstaining

Motion carried: 7-0-0

The meeting was adjourned at 8:00 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Joann Metzger

Recording Secretary