



**HAWKINSVILLE /PULASKI DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY REGULAR MEETING
THURSDAY, MARCH 28, 2024
10:00 AM AT COUNTY ANNEX BUILDING AUDITORIUM
45 S. LUMPKIN STREET
HAWKINSVILLE, GA 31036**

ROLL CALL:

PRESENT:

Jeff Hair- Hawkinsville/Pulaski Development Authority Chairman, Donald Johnson- Hawkinsville/Pulaski Development Authority Vice-Chairman, Joe Sapp, Ken Clark, Gary Dawson, John Bembry, and Jenna Mashburn

ABSENT:

STAFF & OTHERS PRESENT:

Jamie McDonald- Hawkinsville-Pulaski County Economic Development & Main Street Director, Samuel Alderman- Pulaski County Attorney, Jersey Bray- Hawkinsville Code Enforcement Officer, Sara Myers- Hawkinsville City Manager, and Tyler Bryant- Hawkinsville-Pulaski County Chamber President and CEO

SPEAKERS: Kristen Rosenberger- Leeward Renewable Energy Public Affairs, Greg Johnson- Leeward Renewable Energy Senior Developer, and Bruce McCall- Leeward Renewable Energy Attorney

PUBLIC: Jeff Simmons, Michelle Dowdy, Doyle Jones, William Cape, Kye Russell, Candie Horne, Ken Horne, Trey Dunaway, Christopher Martin, Leon Collins, Brian Robinson, Rodney Yawn, Curtis Williams, Cecilia Jones, Logan Offenber, John Offenber, Jeremy Forehand, Shelly Berryhill, Joanne Cheek, Butch Zell, Tammy Coleman, Chris Bell, and Lauren Dunaway.

CALL TO ORDER: At 10:00 AM, Jeff Hair Hawkinsville/Pulaski Development Authority Chairman, called the Thursday, March 28, 2024, Hawkinsville/Pulaski Development Authority meeting to order.

REVIEW/APPROVE: Agenda for Thursday, March 28, 2024, Regular Meeting

Jeff Hair, Hawkinsville/Pulaski Development Authority Chairman, asked for a motion to approve the agenda for the Thursday, March 28, 2024, Hawkinsville/Pulaski Development Authority meeting. Donald Johnson, Hawkinsville/Pulaski Development Authority Vice-Chairman, motioned to approve the agenda. John Bembry, Hawkinsville/Pulaski Development Authority Board Member, seconded; the motion was carried out and approved unanimously.

REVIEW/APPROVE: Monday, March 25, 2024, Regular Meeting Minutes

Jeff Hair, HPDA Chairman, asked for a motion to approve the March 25, 2024, Hawkinsville/Pulaski Development Authority meeting minutes. HDDA Board Member, Ken Clark motioned to approve the March 25, 2024, meeting minutes. HPDA Board Member, John Bembry, seconded; the motion was carried out and approved unanimously.

REVIEW/APPROVE: Lease and Settlement Statement for Health Systems Facilities Inc.

Jeff Hair, HPDA Chairman, introduced the tabled the Lease and Settlement Statement for Health Systems Facilities Inc. agenda item from the March 25, 2024, meeting. Mr. Hair mentioned that there was a question on whether or not the HPDA received payments and asked Mrs. McDonald, Economic Development Director, to discuss the information further. Mrs. McDonald responded that Yes, John Way, HPDA Chairman at the time, stated that there were payments made to the HPDA, and they were received within the first three years after signing the agreement.

HPDA Chairman, Jeff Hair, asked for a motion to approve the lease and settlement statement for Health Systems Facilities Inc. HPDA Board Member, Gary Dawson motioned to approve the agenda item. HPDA Board Member, John Bembry, seconded; the motion was carried out and approved unanimously.

PRESENTATION/INFORMATION: Leeward Energy

HPDA Chairman, Jeff Hair, introduced the next agenda item was Leeward Renewable Energy's presentation. HPDA Chairman, Jeff Hair, emphasized that the HPDA was only here to approve or disapprove the tax abatement and that the HPDA board was not here to determine what landowners can do with their land. Chairman Hair then invited Leeward's team to introduce themselves.

Kristen Rosenberger, Leeward Renewable Energy's Public Affairs Representative thanked the board for hosting the meeting and the public for attending. Then Greg Johnson, Leeward

Renewable Energy's Senior Developer, as well as Bruce McCall, Leeward Renewable Energy's Attorney, both introduced themselves. During the presentation both Kristen and Greg spoke on who Leeward Renewable Energy is, utility scale solar, how solar energy works, how solar energy is collected and sent out across the state, localized benefits that wouldn't put a strain on infrastructure or government amenities, agricultural partners, health and environmental safety- stating no leakage of chemicals, decommissioning, and why they chose Hawkinsville for a potential location. The LRE's team also mentioned that they would use local contractors if possible and that all materials would be delivered here, so that the county would receive local sales taxes on materials.

Bruce McCall, Leeward Renewable Energy's Attorney, stated that they were asking that the board approve the 65% tax abatement in order to be competitive among other Georgia Power projects across the state. Mr. McCall stated that if the bid for the project is too high, the project won't come, and that's why they need a tax abatement to cut costs. Mr. McCall urged that the development authority make a yes or no decision, and that there was no in between or area for negotiation.

Greg Johnson, Leeward Renewable Energy's Senior Developer, said that he felt that they have put together a very competitive bid that Georgia Power would find favorable if approved. They continued their presentation by discussing the timeline for the project decisions. They also discussed the project location, tax abatement and other project details briefly.

PUBLIC COMMENTS: Comment Section open to the public- must have signed in prior to the meeting and is limited to 5 minutes.

HPDA Chairman, Jeff Hair, opened the floor to the public who signed up to speak. Mr. Hair asked if due to the amount of people who signed up, they would limit their comments to 2 minutes each?

Hawkinsville-Pulaski County Chamber of Commerce President and CEO, Tyler Bryant, asked the HPDA board if he could speak first. Mr. Bryant passed out a letter from the Hawkinsville-Pulaski County Chamber of Commerce and endorsed Leeward Renewable Energy and their solar project. Mr. Bryant spoke about the benefits of approving this tax abatement.

Bruce McCall, LRE's Attorney, also mentioned that LRE would have a scholarship for \$10,000 per year that the Pulaski County Board of Education would choose the recipient.

HPDA Chairman, Jeff Hair, stated to please keep comments and questions focused on the tax abatement.

Next, Michelle Dowdy, an adjacent landowner to the proposed project, spoke in opposition to the solar project raising questions of devaluing her property. Mrs. Dowdy stated that her business doesn't get a tax brake and that she doesn't have Georgia Power as her energy supplier, so she doesn't receive anything from this project.

Kristen Rosenberger, LRE's Public Affairs Manager, commented that there have been studies done that say that solar farms don't devalue neighboring community members property.

After Mrs. Dowdy spoke, Jeff Simmons, an adjacent landowner, also spoke in opposition for the solar project. Mr. Simmons questioned their ability to keep their word and not cut corners because of the timeline LRE is on. Mr. Simmons brought up that the business wants to make a profit and keep revenues high. He mentioned how the company will be incentivizing the landowners, but as a neighbor, he hasn't been incentivized by the company for potentially devaluing his property. He commented that if the company was such a good partner why hasn't LRE approached the neighbors to tell them what they are doing or incentivize them the neighbors to make up for devaluing their property. Mr. Simmons quoted Proverbs 18:15.

Greg Johnson, LRE Senior Developer, thanked Mr. Simmons for bringing up his concerns and referenced what was discussed before, by saying property values don't change. He also mentioned that LRE is not asking for anything new, that this tax abatement has been approved before.

HPDA Vice-Chairman, Donald Johnson, asked when this tax abatement had been approved before.

Kristen Rosenberger, LRE's Public Affairs Manager, responded 2018.

HPDA Vice-Chairman, Donald Johnson, said that it was not approved by the board in 2018 because he was on the HPDA board.

Greg Johnson, LRE's Senior Developer, said that according to his past predecessor, it was approved.

HPDA Vice-Chairman, Donald Johnson, said that it would not affect our decision today.

HPDA Chairman, Jeff Hair, asked for the Trey Dunaway to speak.

Mr. Dunaway said that everyone would be getting compensated because there are more tax dollars coming into the county. He went on to say that everyone against this is hindering the landowner's ability to survive and the farmers ability to keep their land. He stated that farming

is hard right now, and that those who believe in the second amendment, are also those who are telling a government board to tell the landowners involve what to do with their land.

HPDA Chairman, Jeff Hair, asked for Leon to speak.

Mr. Leon said that he supported this project and that the money to the county would bring in new people and money to small businesses in town. He mentioned that he lives in Montgomery County, Georgia and that a solar farm has worked out well for them. Mr. Leion said that Hawkinsville, all the small towns are drying up to nothing and this would help, because any progress is an asset to the county.

HPDA Chairman, Jeff Hair, asked Linda Collins to speak.

Mrs. Collins stated that she is a landowner and she rents her land out to a farmer and she hopes that he continue to rent the land so that he can be profitable but she said that \$31,000 is what is collected on the land currently, but you could collect \$590,000 on the land. Mrs. Collins said that that is a big difference to her and she thinks it would be good for the county and the landowners.

HPDA Chairman, Jeff Hair, said that was all the names on the list for public comments or questions so we will move along.

REVIEW/APPROVE: Tax abatement for Leeward Energy Solar Farm Project Contingent Upon approval of Zoning and Approval of binding agreement stipulations between Leeward Energy and Hawkinsville/Pulaski Development Authority that will be put into at a later date

HPDA Chairman, Jeff Hair, introduced the next agenda item, the Tax Abatement for Leeward Energy Solar Farm Project. He then asked if any HPDA board member has a conflict of interest in this project that would require them to abstain from this vote.

Jenna Mashburn, Pulaski County Sole Commissioner and HPDA Board Member, abstained because she is a governing authority of the county, and the county would be the direct beneficiary of the tax revenues.

Next, Mr. Hair asked if Economic Development Director, Jamie McDonald, would give a brief overview of the proposal, and then the HPDA will ask Leeward Renewable Energy questions.

Economic Development Director, Jamie McDonald, introduced herself and described her job role to the public. Mrs. McDonald stated that Leeward Renewable Energy approached the County Commissioner, County Attorney, Code Enforcement, and herself on November 29, 2023.

Prior to November 29, 2023, Mrs. McDonald stated that she had no information about the project.

Mrs. McDonald discussed the 300-Megawatt Solar Project that would be located on 2,817 acres of land with a capital investment of \$325,000,000 and 300 construction jobs lasting 12 to 18 months during the construction period. After meeting with Leeward Renewable Energy, Mrs. McDonald said that the County Commissioner, Code Enforcement, and herself, researched the company, solar power, and spoke to many colleagues across the State of Georgia. Mrs. McDonald also stated that during the 4 months after the meeting, she made sure the HPDA was trained and in compliance with DCA, in order to issue a bond to abate taxes if needed in time for Georgia Power's project deadline.

Mrs. McDonald then explained that the state of Georgia has received many projects that require renewable energy sources. She discussed that a 300-MegaWatt project would power 300,000 homes and that Pulaski County only had 6,874 homes. Mrs. McDonald then discussed how these renewable energy projects were providing power to projects outside of Pulaski County and how the counties that are acquiring these projects aren't responsible for providing land to supply these renewable energy sources. Mrs. McDonald then went on to say that the reason why everyone is seeing so many solar farms pop up in rural areas is that these renewable energy companies look for cheaper, flat land to be more cost effective. Then, some of these companies, but not all, use landowners to pressure local decision makers into incentivizing these solar companies through large tax abatements to make the deal go through, all while making the decision time sensitive, so decision makers are forced to make a decision without being able to consider all the underlying costs associated with bringing a solar project to the area. Mrs. McDonald stated that now, as some of these projects are making way, communities are starting to incur the underlying costs associated with these projects and that these costs are quickly outweighing the benefits received.

Mrs. McDonald went on to say that she was not implying that Leeward Renewable Energy has been involved in these dealings, but simply stating a brief history of these projects around the state.

After discussing the background and history of these projects, Mrs. McDonald then talked about Leeward Renewable Energy's 65% tax abatement with level pilot payments on \$325,000,000 capital over a 25 year period. Mrs. McDonald discussed what would typically warrant a tax abatement, which was the creation of a large number of well-paying full time jobs. She also discussed what a tax abatement was. Mrs. McDonald reviewed Leeward Renewable Energy's proposal stating that Leeward Renewable Energy is asking that 65% of their taxes be eliminated and that they only pay 35% of their taxes over a 25 year period. Mrs. McDonald went in to more detail by stating that the 35% of taxes on the project capital would cause a 19 fold increase over the current taxes received.

Mrs. McDonald then discussed that over the 25 years, Leeward Energy would pay in total to the school, county, and fire department around \$14.7 million. She then stated that based on millage rates, the county and fire department would receive around \$ 7.5 million, and the school would receive around \$7.1 million. Mrs. McDonald stated that the increase in taxes would be a significant benefit to the school and county in comparison to what the county currently receives; however, that the real beneficiary would be Leeward Renewable Energy, who wouldn't have to pay around \$27.4 million in taxes over that 25 year period.

Mrs. McDonald then discussed other benefits of the proposal and after stated that it was up to the Hawkinsville/Pulaski Development Authority to review the proposal, ask questions, and decide if this is a beneficial project for the Pulaski County community.

HPDA Chairman, Jeff Hair, thanked Mrs. McDonald.

HPDA Board Member, John Bembry, introduced himself and stated that he had experience with a solar company who wanted to put solar panels on his land. He agreed reluctantly to do so and then the company went out of business before the project made way. He mentioned that the solar company he dealt with did not ask for any tax abatements. Dr. Bembry than said he was an advocate for private property rights and said he believes he has the right to make decisions about his land, as do all of the landowners, but there is an issue of the county subsidizing the project is another issue. Dr. Bembry stated that it was a Georgia Power project, just like the one today and that bids for these projects will open again. He stated that the HPDA was only approached with this decision a couple of weeks ago after they completed training. Dr. Bembry said that in training, they suggested that the development authority board should require an economic impact study to be done to see if this project is beneficial to the county. He said with out an economic impact study to be done, he didn't think the board could make a good decision and he didn't want to be pushed into a decision due to a deadline. He also mentioned that Houston County requires ownership of the land, which negates who is responsible for decommission of the project. Dr. Bembry also asked if LRE would have any federal assistance?

Bruce McCall, LRE's Attorney, said he was not aware of any.

Greg Johnson, LRE's Senior Developer, said that no, they are relying on the county to provide those incentives.

HPDA Board Member, John Bembry, asked if the inflation reduction act assists the solar industry?

Greg Johnson, said it does, but it depends on the area in which the project is located and that he wasn't sure if Hawkinsville was in that area.

HPDA Board Member, John Bembry, said that it was because Hawkinsville is in the United States. Hawkinsville comes under the Farmland Protection Act which is required by NRCS Farmland Protection Act score to determine if prime agricultural land would be impacted or not from projects like these. The score that will determine whether you get any benefits of the Inflation Reduction Act. Dr. Bembry said if you haven't done that, then you haven't done all your homework. Dr. Bembry then handed Greg Johnson the form. Dr. Bembry then asked if LRE could provide the Farmland Conversion Impact Grading as well as the Economic Impact Study, that would help us make our decision. Dr. Bembry then asked LRE representatives if they have reviewed the *Recommended Procedures for Siting Solar in Georgia* document?

Greg Johnson, LRE Senior Developer, stated yes.

HPDA Board Member, John Bembry, asked if they are compliant with all the recommendations of the Environmental Protection Division and the US Fish and Wildlife Service and can you show us you are compliant?

Greg Johnson, LRE Senior Developer, stated yes, they have done studies but don't have it on file.

Bruce McCall, LRE's Attorney, said that the information has been turned in to the County Zoning and that LRE is in compliance with all the County's Solar Zoning ordinances.

HPDA Board Member, John Bembry, stated that he saw that LRE would give the development authority a \$50,000 issuance fee on the bond. He said typically that is 1/8 of 1%.

Bruce McCall, LRE's Attorney, explained the bond process to the board and explained that they are phantom bonds. He said that no money changes hands and a \$50,000 issuance fee is typical. He said that a bond that you would have to sell to the public warrants a 1/8 of 1% issuance fee.

HPDA Board Member, John Bembry, asked if LRE had stockholders?

Greg Johnson, LRE Senior Developer, stated that they were a privately owned company, and their parent company is Omars, who are a Canadian company. Greg then said that the decommissioning is 100% on LRE.

HPDA Board Member, John Bembry, asked that since LRE was a privately owned company they could go bankrupt, and if that happens, is there an account set up to cover the costs of the decommission in 40 years?

Greg Johnson, LRE Senior Developer, stated that yes, they would have that account set up.

HPDA Board Member, John Bembry, asked if LRE would pay for the Economic Impact Study for the HPDA?

Greg Johnson, LRE Senior Developer, stated that we could.

Bruce McCall, LRE's Attorney, said that they do have an issue on timing, and said that Dr. Bembry was right, that Georgia Power would come out with another RFP in two or three years, but it will not be in six months. He stated that Georgia Power is setting the time table for this project, and the deadline is April 10, 2024. Mr. McCall said that LRE needs to have a decision by April 10, 2024.

HPDA Vice Chairman, Donald Johnson, asked if LRE would pay for the study to be done or not.

Bruce McCall, LRE's Attorney, said yes but they can't get the study done in time for the decision because Alfie's timetable is six to eight weeks.

HPDA Board Member, Joe Sapp, asked Mr. McCall if the 65% tax abatement was standard and then asked if Mr. McCall could provide a list of all the counties that accepted a 65% tax abatement.

Bruce McCall, LRE's Attorney, said he could provide a list of counties who have given you a 65% tax abatement.

HPDA Board Member, Donald Johnson, asked if there was a political change, there are a lot of green energy policies put into place with the current administration, If those were to go away, how is that going to affect LRE?

Bruce McCall, LRE's Attorney, said it wouldn't affect us, because assuming the contract is done, Georgia Power has a binding 25-year contract.

HPDA Chairman, Jeff Hair, referenced prior points made on decommissioning land, and asked if LRE has decommissioned any projects?

LRE Public Affairs Manager, Kristen Rosenberger, stated that no, they haven't decommissioned a solar project yet.

HPDA Chairman, Jeff Hair, asked if LRE knows how much it would cost to decommission a project right now per acre in Southeast United States?

Greg Johnson, LRE Senior Developer, said it should be in a package they left with the development authority. Mr. Johnson said they must put up a bond regardless of the price.

HPDA Chairman, Jeff Hair, was concerned that there would be no way to estimate how much something is going to cost 25 years from now.

Greg Johnson, LRE Senior Developer, said that every 10 to 15 years they reassess to make sure there is enough.

HPDA Vice-Chairman, Donald Johnson, stated that last time we asked how much it cost to decommission this project, it was confidential, and now LRE is saying that they left us a report that I haven't seen.

Bruce McCall, LRE's Attorney, apologized, saying it was not included in what they sent us.

HPDA Vice-Chairman, Donald Johnson, asked LRE why it was confidential last time?

Greg Johnson, LRE Senior Developer, said because we are not allowed to give you that information right now, but it will be posted once the bond is issued.

Bruce McCall, LRE's Attorney, added that the amount is estimated by the bond issuance company and is adjusted to match the cost later on.

HPDA Vice-Chairman, Donald Johnson, asked what happens if the amount to decommission exceeds the bond, because you have humans who make errors all the time? What if its doubled?

Bruce McCall, LRE's Attorney, said they would be responsible for it.

HPDA Vice-Chairman, Donald Johnson, asked what if LRE wasn't around anymore?

Greg Johnson, LRE Senior Developer, said that's why they go back and review the bond every year to make sure it will cover the costs.

HPDA Board Member, Gary Dawson, asked how many jobs would this create, not including the construction jobs at the beginning of the project?

Bruce McCall, LRE's Attorney, stated only a few jobs; however, the impact on the property value is significant and that's where this project differs from a typical project. He said that what Alfie does with the Economic Impact study is he looks at how many more class rooms you will have to build, because your bringing in all these new jobs. With this project, you don't have those costs.

HPDA Vice-Chairman, Donald Johnson, asked do we know what costs are going to be involved for the county?

Bruce McCall, LRE's Attorney, said none that he could think of. There's no infrastructure required.

HPDA Board Member, Gary Dawson, stated that he drove on those roads yesterday when it was raining, and you can't utilize those roads after raining weather. When those large trucks and an increase in traffic come because of construction, who is going to pay to maintain the roads?

Greg Johnson, LRE Senior Developer, said that they would be in charge of maintaining the roads, but to your point, those roads are only going to be affected during the one year during the construction phase.

HPDA Vice-Chairman, Donald Johnson, asked if construction traffic would hinder homeowners in the area from accessing their homes.

Greg Johnson, LRE Senior Developer, said no it shouldn't.

HPDA Chairman, Jeff Hair, asked about the purchase of the equipment used during construction, and if the equipment would be dropped shipped so that we could receive sales tax.

Bruce McCall, LRE's Attorney, said yes, by a rough estimate you will receive around \$2.4 million in sales tax.

HPDA Vice-Chairman, Donald Johnson, asked how many wells and private family cemeteries will be affected by this project?

Greg Johnson, LRE Senior Developer, said LRE has already started some cultural resource assessments and have them marked off and they are unaffected.

HPDA Vice-Chairman, Donald Johnson, asked how they were going to protect this investment from thieves who collect copper?

Greg Johnson, LRE Senior Developer, said they have security in place and many security systems, and the perimeters are barricaded by a fence and then a barricaded buffer. Also, the main part of the substation also must be fenced per state and federal regulations.

HPDA Vice-Chairman, Donald Johnson, stated that he thinks most of the board members are in favor of solar but they aren't sure they are in favor of a tax abatement. He went on to say that

he knows that LRE won't tell us their profit per acre, but Mr. Johnson said that his research says it will be around \$1,700 to \$3,500 per acre, per month. He then asked LRE, why they would need our abatement? Why not cut your profit margin a bit to cover the cost of your taxes?

Greg Johnson, LRE Senior Developer, said the project won't underwrite and you can't receive insurance, so it doesn't work.

HPDA Vice-Chairman, Donald Johnson, asked is that because of greed because you're not willing to cut other profits.

Greg Johnson, LRE Senior Developer, said no, it just doesn't work on our end. Then there will be a county that will do it, and Georgia Power will pick them and then Pulaski County will lose a chance for \$600,000 to nothing because we won't be able to put in a competitive bid.

HPDA Vice-Chairman, Donald Johnson, asked not able or not willing?

Greg Johnson, LRE Senior Developer, said not willing.

Bruce McCall, LRE's Attorney, said this project is driven by per kilowatt cost. If costs increase our go up, and there will be another county or bidder that will receive the project. It's not a matter of cutting our profits, they will get the project.

HPDA Board Member, Ken Clark, said you could cut your profit margin down, and increase our tax revenues more. You have a certain profit revenue you need to meet, is that not correct?

Bruce McCall, LRE's Attorney, said yes to be able to get insurance and financing.

HPDA Board Member, Ken Clark, asked first solar who you bought out filed bankruptcy is that correct?

Greg Johnson, LRE Senior Developer, said no, they were acquired by us so that we could go into the solar energy business.

HPDA Board Member, Ken Clark, asked through bankruptcy?

Greg Johnson, LRE Senior Developer, said he wasn't sure, but he knows it was acquired because First Solar wanted to go into the manufacturing side of solar.

HPDA Board Member, Ken Clark, stated that he was involved in the solar project at Robbins Air Force Base. They did not give a 65% tax abatement; it was a lot less than that. Mr. Clark also stated that there are a lot of things they aren't considering and there will be costs to the county. For example, new fire fighting equipment because the fire department does not have

the equipment available to fight a large electrical fire. That is something the development authority board must consider. Georgia Power furnished them with the equipment need for large fires and trained the fireman because it is a huge risk. The bottom line is LRE wants a hire abatement to increase your profit margin, but we are in business to look after the taxpayers. Mr. Clark then said to LRE that they could lower their profit margin and ask for a smaller abatement and everyone would win, but LRE is coming at the high end. Mr. Clark then said that it was hard to abate that 65% when you are only creating one full time job. The H&V tax abatement was at 35% for 5 years and they brought in 80 jobs and capital.

Bruce McCall, LRE's Attorney, said that Mr. Ken was correct, they did do a 35% tax abatement, but questioned how that affected infrastructure, schools, and growth.

HPDA Board Member, Ken Clark, said it didn't affect it that much because they hired local people.

Bruce McCall, LRE's Attorney, said that solar projects are different.

Greg Johnson, LRE Senior Developer, said solar is new to everybody and he wouldn't deny that, but the 65% is a standard ask. Mr. Johnson then stated that with your concerns about the fire department, we met to train firefighters and provided money to the fire department.

Bruce McCall, LRE's Attorney, said this is not the end of the discussion, we are willing to work with the county.

Kristen Rosenberger, LRE's Public Affairs Manager, said that LRE would work with the county and Fire Department to get them what they need.

HPDA Chairman, Jeff Hair, said that his concern is that there is nothing binding to hold them accountable for what LRE is promising today, and we are being asked today to give the tax abatement. Mr. Hair went on to say that if we vote yes, today that because there is nothing binding, LRE doesn't have to uphold what they've promised. Mr. Hair then asked what if the fire department equipment totaled to be \$500,000? Then we would be doing great, but what if totaled to be \$600,000? Then we would be in a hole and the county would then have upset citizens. Mr. Hair said that the development authorities backs are against the wall because of the deadline, and we have been put in a very hard position without hardly any information.

HPDA Vice-Chairman, Donald Johnson, asked if Taylor County got an economic development study done?

Bruce McCall, LRE's Attorney, said he hasn't got an economic development study done for a solar development project because there is not as many cost to consider.

HPDA Vice-Chairman, Donald Johnson, said that it should be a quick study then.

Bruce McCall, LRE's Attorney, said that Alfie says it six to eight weeks and we've never had a county ask for it, but there is a timing issue.

HPDA Board Member, Ken Clark, said he understood it was a timing issue, but Jenna was notified on November 29, 2023.

HPDA Board Member, Jenna Mashburn, said on behalf of the County, the development authority, the land owners, and the surrounding land owners, LRE had began conversations to her knowledge as early as last April about the fact that this was coming back to the table. Mrs. Mashburn said that her office was not notified of that until November of 2023, at which time her office scheduled a meeting and that is when the proposal was brought to the table. At that point there was a lot of ground work that had to be done and done very quickly. Mrs. Mashburn then said, as we all know, even though you might want something to happen quickly, government doesn't always work that way. Mrs. Mashburn went on to say that there hasn't been a need for our authority to meet until we received this proposal, and in order to do so we had to make sure they were provided training, which is only offered on certain dates. Just this has put a lot of strain on a lot of people, and a lot of resources. Mrs. Mashburn stated that she didn't think solar is a bad thing when it is taken into consideration, done in a timely fashion, and managed the right way it can be beneficial to a lot of people. Mrs. Mashburn said that she wanted what's best for this county and its citizens, but when something is brought in under a time constraint, it can be very difficult to a lot of people in the community. Mrs. Mashburn said that if this had been brought to the county level at the same time it was brought to the landowners, we would have had more time to ask these questions, to ask for the economic impact report, and to do the research. Mrs. Mashburn asked why didn't the proposal surface in enough time for the entities involved to get enough clarity to make a decision?

Greg Johnson, LRE Senior Developer, said that he really appreciated all the work we put forth to get the meeting scheduled, and he was under the impression that all of this was settled in 2018. Mr. Johnson said that we were under the impression that the tax abatement was fine, and we would come back to it. Mr. Johnson said that when they met with the county, that none of this would have to come under review again.

HPDA Board Member, Jenna Mashburn, said that 2018 doesn't seem like a long time ago, but that she didn't sit in her current position as Sole County Commissioner then and the dynamics of the world have changed. She then said that the preparation and due diligence leading up to the meeting required more information.

Greg Johnson, LRE Senior Developer, said that he apologized and that it has been unique for everyone involved.

HPDA Chairman, Jeff Hair, asked if any of the board members had any other questions?

HPDA Vice Chairman, Donald Johnson asked if taxpayers would get any relief from their energy bills?

Bruce McCall, LRE's Attorney, said that is up to Georgia Power on where the electricity goes.

Greg Johnson, LRE Senior Developer, said that we have to work together to get the deal with Georgia Power in order to provide as much benefit as we can to the county, and in order to do that we have to make a competitive deal.

HPDA Vice Chairman, Donald Johnson, said that the county and farmers could use this money, however; what happens if LRE disappears. Is there a way to pay this upfront?

Bruce McCall, LRE's Attorney, what do you mean?

HPDA Vice Chairman, Donald Johnson, said in reference to the pilot payments, could they be paid upfront?

Bruce McCall, LRE's Attorney, said he had never heard of that being done. Then said that LRE would have a choice to go away, because they would have a 25-year contract with Georgia Power.

HPDA Vice Chairman, Donald Johnson, said you wouldn't be the first company to go bankrupt or could be sold.

Bruce McCall, LRE's Attorney, their would be contractual requirements and solar power is different in that once you get it built, there's not a lot of costs in operating it and that is why the bonds are in place.

Greg Johnson, LRE Senior Developer, said that the pilot payments are in place so that the county can budget, because they know how much they should get every year, so that they can plan ahead.

HPDA Vice Chairman, Donald Johnson, said but it would be nicer to have it in the bank too.

Bruce McCall, LRE's Attorney, asked if the factory project was paid up front?

HPDA Vice Chairman, Donald Johnson, responded saying that it was a different project.

HPDA Board Member, Joe Sapp, stated that he deals with RFP deadlines every day, and he feels that LRE is asking the development authority to make a decision that would impact everyone in this county, and that he personally doesn't feel educated enough on the subject to make a decision, and its not that he would be against it, he just doesn't have enough information today.

Greg Johnson, LRE Senior Developer, stated that he thought LRE was just asking to have what had already been approved and what has been approved through out the state. The 50% tax abatement wont be approved.

HPDA Board Member, Joe Sapp, responded that he knows the farmers could use the money, but doesn't feel like he has enough information to make a decision that will affect all tax payers.

Kristen Rosenberger, LRE's Public Affairs Representative, said that we all have different perspectives but we both need to work together. At the end of the day, if LRE doesn't get the abatement, LRE doesn't get the project either.

HPDA Vice Chairman, Donald Johnson, asked again why LRE didn't contact the county in the spring, because we would have had a lot more time.

Jeff Hair, HPDA Chairman, asked if LRE was just made aware to day that this was not already approved with first solar?

Kristen Rosenberger, LRE's Public Affairs Representative, said that was our impression.

HPDA Board Member, Joe Sapp, asked if they had the paperwork from the approval?

Bruce McCall, LRE's Attorney, said yes, I have the MOU that is signed by this board for 2018.

HPDA Vice Chairman, Donald Johnson, asked who signed it?

Bruce McCall, LRE's Attorney, said he didn't have the document with him, but it was signed with First Solar, but now the time period has run out so they submitted the same project.

Kristen Rosenberger, LRE's Public Affairs Representative, said that sometimes the counties will extend the dates.

HPDA Chairman, Jeff Hair, said he wasn't on the board then, but that was the first he had heard of it.

HPDA Vice Chairman, Donald Johnson, stated that a few of us were on the board then and he doesn't remember taking a vote but all the conversation was negative. He said he was under the impression that it didn't pass.

Bruce McCall, LRE's Attorney, stated his firm was on the project in 2018 but he was not.

HPDA Board Member, Ken Clark, said that their was a chance that this could be pushed back again past April, couldn't the deadline be pushed back again?

Bruce McCall, LRE's Attorney, responded theoretically yes, but it's not likely due to the fact they moved it back two weeks.

HPDA Board Member, Ken Clark, motioned to not approve the 65% tax abatement for Leeward Renewable Energy's solar farm project on the basis that the Hawkinsville/Pulaski Development Authority did not have enough information to come to a decision. HPDA Board Member, Joe Sapp, seconded. The motion was approved by HPDA Board Members Jeff Hair, Donald Johnson, Ken Clark, Joe Sapp, Gary Dawson, and John Bembry. HPDA Board Member, Jenna Mashburn, abstained from the vote due to a conflict of interest.

ADJOURN:

The meeting was adjourned at 11:41 AM.

Jeff Hair, Hawkinsville/Pulaski Development Authority Chairman

Date: _____