

City to intervene in solar energy plan

Wednesday, May 22, 2024

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The City of Lexington today petitioned the Kentucky Public Service Commission for the right to intervene in a case concerning the location of a solar energy facility on a Fayette County farm.

East Kentucky Power Cooperative has asked the Commission for permission to build a solar facility in Fayette County. The Commission regulates utilities in Kentucky. Under state law, utilities are exempt from local zoning regulations. The only opportunity the city has to weigh in on this proposal before the Commission is by intervening.

“The city does not currently allow for commercial solar facilities under its zoning ordinances,” Mayor Linda Gorton said. “We need time to study and create a plan concerning solar facilities that serve the best interest of Fayette County.”

The Mayor said the city is concerned about permanent consequences on land use policies as they relate to solar generation on commercial and agriculture zoned land. “The city has long limited commercial and industrial uses in agricultural zones due to the importance of agriculture to our economy,” she said.

The project is to be located on 387 acres in eastern Fayette County. The property is zoned for agricultural purposes. Agriculture and agribusiness contribute over \$2.3 billion annually to the local economy.

Gorton said the city supports renewable energy. “However, we should have a say in determining the siting of such projects in this county,” Gorton said.

The proposed project would provide only questionable, if any, benefits to Lexington-Fayette County. “All or nearly all of the energy produced would be sold on a wholesale market and provide little to no energy to Lexington consumers,” Gorton said.

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