

**AGENDA  
CITY OF COKATO  
PLANNING & ZONING  
CITY HALL  
OCTOBER 11, 2021**

**1.** Call to Order & Pledge of Allegiance: 6:00 p.m.

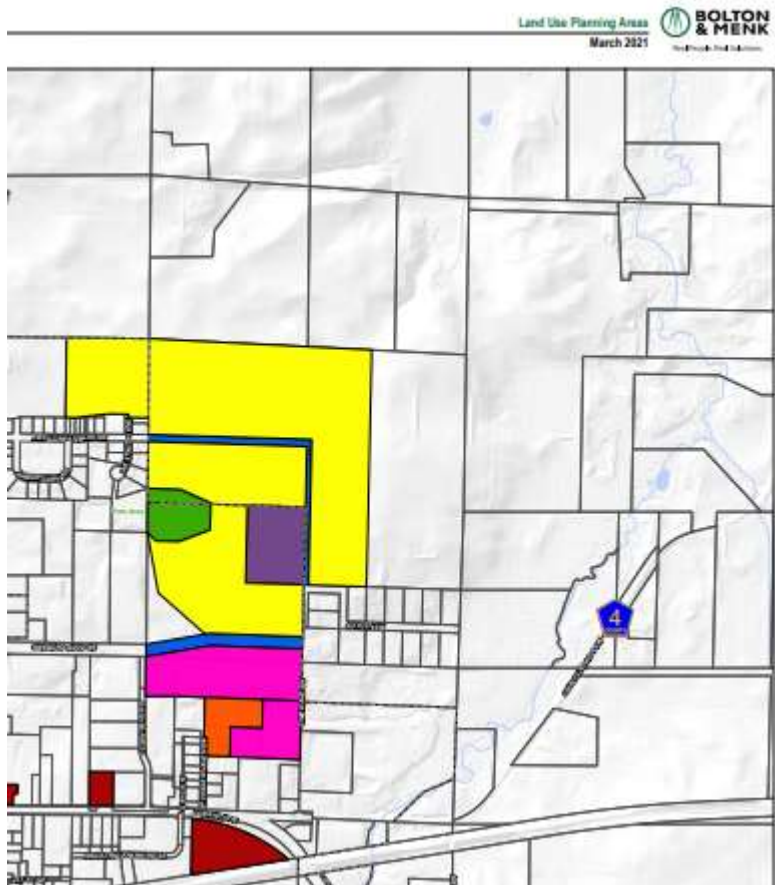
**2.** Approval of Agenda

**3.** New Business

a. Northeast Planning Area

We will be reviewing the Northeast Planning Area proposed land uses and a variety of issues regarding the Pleasant Street area and areas between Olsen Boulevard and Omer Avenue.





- b. Request of USS Charger Solar LLC to rezone the south half of unplatted land in Cokato described at the 38.64 acres of the Northwest Quarter or the Southeast Quarter of Section 27, Township 119, Range 28 (4825 OMER AVE NE) from R-2, Multi Family Residential to I, Industry District and a conditional use permit to allow a 1 megawatt community solar garden. The property is 4825 Omer Avenue NE.

**City of Cokato Planning Commission/City Council Review USS Charger Solar LLC  
October 8, 2021**

**Request**

Request of USS Charger Solar LLC to rezone the south half of unplatted land in Cokato described at the 38.64 acres of the Northwest Quarter or the Southeast

Quarter of Section 27, Township 119, Range 28 (4825 OMER AVE NE) from R-2, Multi Family Residential to I, Industry District and a conditional use permit to allow a 1 megawatt community solar garden. The property is 4825 Omer Avenue NE.

## **Review**

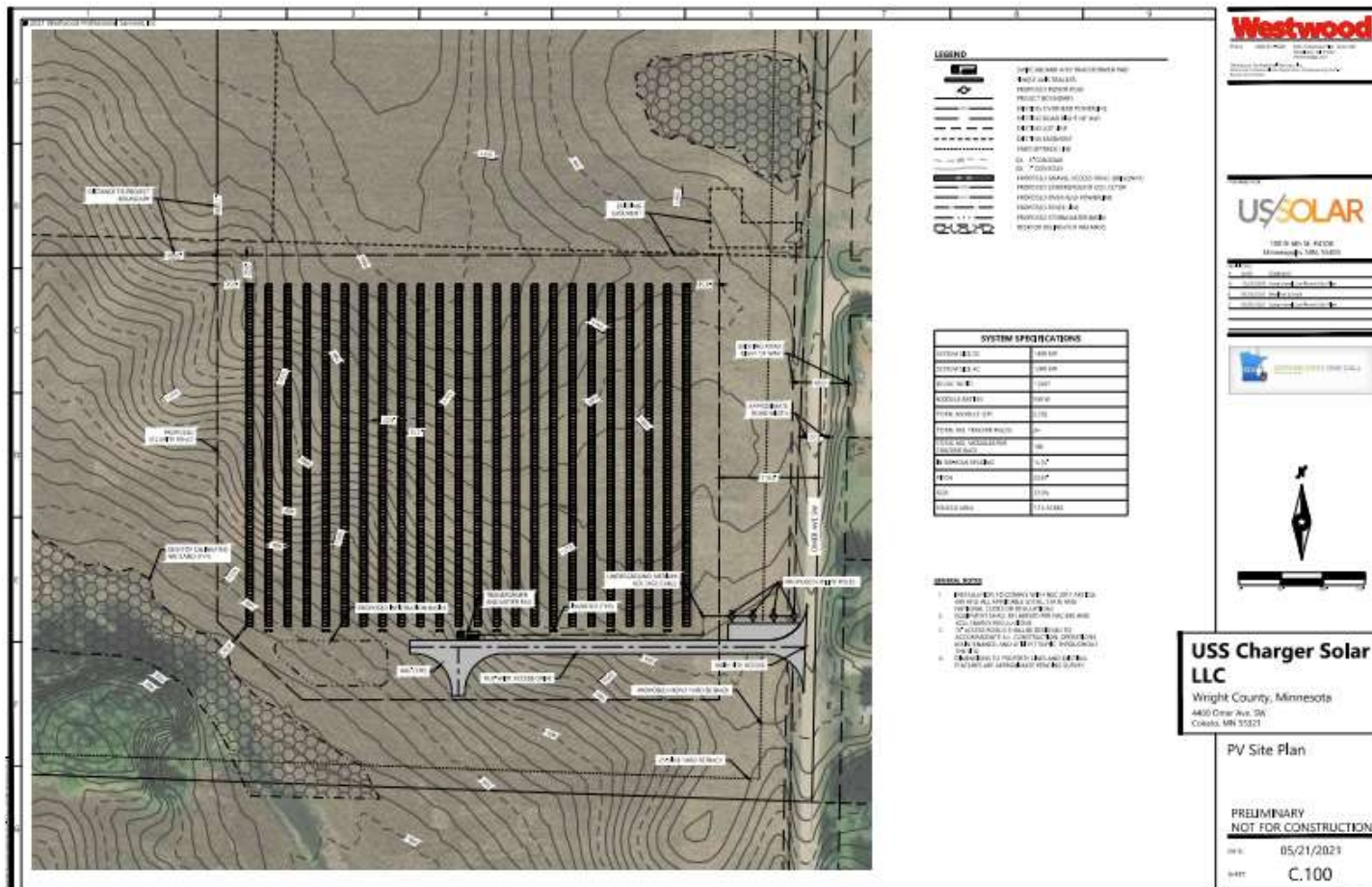
### ***Rezoning***

The City shall review and process the rezoning first to allow the applicant to pursue the conditional use permit in the Industrial District to allow the solar farm. The property to the north was zoned as R-2 as well and was rezoned in November 2019 from R-2 to I Industrial for allowing a solar farm via a conditional use permit. The existing solar farm is about 10 acres in size and there is another 10 acres to the west of the existing solar farm.

The proposed request is similar to the previous request in 2019 by allowing a solar farm. At that time there was a lengthy discussion and eventually the request was approved.

### **Existing Zoning Map**





Proposed Site Plan

## Existing Solar Farm Size



It is safe to assume that solar field construction will continue to expand to the western 20 acres of this parcel as well at some point and time which would make for up to 40 acres of solar panels in the area if both are expanded. If the solar fields are not expanded, then the parcel becomes landlocked and likely will remain for farmland.

The property owner's long term plan in September 2019 was the following:



Date: 9/18/19



In reviewing the City's Comprehensive Plan that was developed in 2003 the land is considered outside of City limits and is not specified to be any Land Use designated as this property was annexed in 2004 after the plan was approved.



## Site Characteristics

The site has about a 8 percent slope with higher elevations occurring at the northeast corner. The primary goal of the City has been to create a roadway network that would not rely upon Highway 12 as the “connector” between parcels and to have such roadway maximize the development potential of all properties. For example, the City has Highway 12 that makes it way through the community west to east and Broadway Avenue (County Road 3 that makes it way north to south) however there are no local street connections from Broadway east or west as seen in this aerial photograph.





If we examine the planning area in greater detail there are other issues to consider. With the recent City Council discussion about the water pressure on Pleasant Street NE, the City may look to loop the water line from Pleasant to Omer and could look at replacing the as well (blue line). Also Pleasant Avenue could extended to the north for possible multi family on the east side of the street (orange squares). One option could be reviewing a possible street connection from Swendra to Omer Avenue. This would be a new street created for these parcels.



While street reconstructions are 100% paid for by the City, I would view the City participation in the construction of new streets to be less. This could vary from 0% to 50% of the cost and this would have to be determined by the Council. For example, if a new residential subdivision is created, the developer pays for the entire cost of the streets and utilities, and I could see a commercial/industrial subdivision to be treated the same way. At the same time running a new road next to a possible solar farm may not be the best public investment as half the cost of the street would be applied to the solar farm property.

### **Wright County Moratorium**

In addition, the City is also interested in the results of Wright County and their proposed rules for solar farm projects as well.

### **Rezoning Recommendation**

Therefore it seems that the City has a further discussion on this matter to determine in this area where residential and industrial land should be slated in this area with the location of public improvements (streets, water and sewer) that would make the most sense. Recent activities such as the Pleasant Street water main analysis, discussion of further construction of neighboring parcels, the City's Housing Study and now the submittal of the solar farm has increased need for further planning efforts in this area. The City will continue planning in this area and report back to Planning and Zoning Commission as well. The plan is to include a November 1, 2021 public meeting of people/property owners within the area to discuss land usage

Therefore I would recommend to table the request until the City has time to study this planning area further to see if a solar farm would be the best use of property.

### **Conditional Use Permit Recommendation**

The rezoning of the parcel needs to be accepted and passed before the conditional use permit can be accepted, therefore I would formally recommend tabling that request as well at this time.

### **4. Adjournment**