

UTILITY BOARD/COMMON COUNCIL
Monday, November 10, 2025
5:30 P.M.

The Common Council and Utility Board of the City of Huntingburg met in joint session on Monday, November 10, 2025 at 5:30 P.M. in the Council Chambers of the Huntingburg City Hall at 508 E. Fourth Street, Huntingburg, Indiana. Members Kissling, Bolte, Bounds and McPherron were physically present. Member Wehr was absent. This meeting was opened to the public and made available to members of the public and the media streamed through the City of Huntingburg's YouTube channel accessed via the City of Huntingburg's website. Also present were Mayor Elkins, Clerk-Treasurer Dippel. City Attorney Schneider was absent.

Mayor Elkins called the meeting to order.

A motion was made by Kissling, seconded by Bounds and carried to approve the minutes of the October 28, 2025 regular meeting.

A motion was made by Bolte, seconded by McPherron and carried to approve the claims as presented.

The Mayor presented a proposed ordinance amending some Park & Recreation Department fees effective January 1, 2026.

A motion was made by McPherron, seconded by Wehr and carried to introduce Ordinance No. 2025-29 entitled:

**AN ORDINANCE AMENDING ORDINANCE NO. 2025-13
ESTABLISHING A SCHEDULE OF FEES FOR USE OF SERVICES AND
FACILITIES OF THE PARK AND RECREATION DEPARTMENT OF THE
CITY OF HUNTINGBURG**

A motion was made by Bolte, seconded by Kissling and carried with unanimous consent to suspend the rules and consider the adoption of Ordinance No. 2025-29 at the same meeting it was introduced.

A motion was made by McPherron, seconded by Bolte and carried to adopt Ordinance No. 2025-29.

Upon call of roll for the adoption or rejection of Ordinance No. 2025-29 the vote being 5 ayes, 0 nays, in favor of adoption, Ordinance No. 2025-29 was duly passed and adopted this date at the hour of 5:38 P.M.

The Mayor presented the 2026 City Calendar and the 2026 Holidays schedule for approval of the Council.

A motion was made by Bolte, seconded by Wehr and carried to approve the 2026 City Calendar and 2026 Holiday schedule as presented.

Clerk-Treasurer Dippel informed the Council of board appointments to consider. He noted confirming with Nick Stevens and Jayme Rasche their willingness to serve on the Huntingburg Redevelopment Commission. He also noted a vacant appointment on the Huntingburg Board of Zoning Appeals (BZA). There was discussion.


A motion was made by Bounds, seconded by Kissling to appoint Nick Stevens and Jayme Rasche to the Huntingburg Redevelopment Commission for 1 year terms beginning January 1, 2026 and ending December 31, 2026.

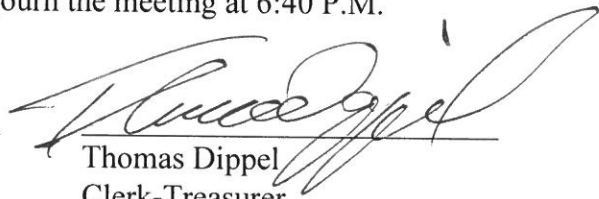
A BZA appointment will be considered in the future.

Dippel presented a report of receipts from the Tax Refund Exchange and Compliance System (TRECS) for debts owed the City. TRECS is a program that intercepts state income tax refunds to collect outstanding debts owed to local government entities. The amount collected for 2025 is \$6,608.95.

Holly Bartelt Gogel, representing a group of concerned citizens, addressed the Council with concerns of the proposed Crossvine Battery Energy Storage System and Solar Project being considered south of Huntingburg, almost to Holland. She asked the Council to consider placing a pause (a moratorium) on the proposed project. There was discussion of the proposed project between the group and the Council. The Mayor will discuss actions that can be taken by the City with City Attorney Schneider. He indicated that he will contact Gogel with information obtained. Gogel's presentation is Exhibit A.

There being no further business before the Council, a motion was made by Kissling, seconded by Wehr and carried to adjourn the meeting at 6:40 P.M.


M. Neil Elkins
Mayor


Thomas Dippel
Clerk-Treasurer

11/10/25
C.C. Meeting - 5:30 pm
EXHIBIT A

November 10, 2025

Huntingburg City Council Members

**Tim Wehr, Glen Kissling, Jeff Bounds, Steve McPherron, Pamela Bolte,
and Mayor Elkins**

I am standing in front of you today, with my neighbors and with a sincere and heavy heart, to ask that you consider placing a pause (a moratorium) on the proposed Crossvine Battery Energy Storage System and Solar project, allowing for time to better understand the impacts of this infrastructure. This is not a message born of hostility to renewable energy, it is a message born out of love for our homes, the land, the safety of our children, the schools, the honorable members of our emergency services, the people who have tended to and sacrificed for this land, and most importantly, to the future generations who will have to inherit the consequences of your decisions today and with respect to this project. Based on the maps collected from various sources, including AES (the current project owner), it appears that approximately 40% of the area designated for solar panels falls within the City of Huntingburg's two-mile fringe area, also known as the Extraterritorial Jurisdiction (ETJ).

Before I continue, I want to take the time to acknowledge my neighbors who are present behind me today. Additionally, I do not want to discount the 200+ signatures we have collected.

Communication

We have come to the table to understand how this project is a benefit for our community, our schools, and our homes (not our houses but our homes). Each of us has a story of caring for this land and community that will be adjacent to this project. This project will be in the backdrop of the playground of Huntingburg Elementary School, a town staple for what we are known for when a visitor comes to the City of Huntingburg. Right now, it feels as though our rural landscape and the people who live here, the same people who have given back to the city and county their entire lives as well as those who are trying to establish their future lives, are a page being erased before we've had a chance to read it. There has been little, and in most cases, zero communication on this project to the neighbors and local communities to be directly impacted. There has been no public communication, meetings, or similar. Residents that have been contacted have received a general letter - no plans, maps, details, or timeline. While I realize a public meeting was scheduled for this week (the public to only be notified via social media late last week), there has been no public involvement on something that will have serious, if not also dangerous consequences.

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Safety

The proposed Crossvine Battery Storage System is approximately two miles from Huntingburg Elementary School, Southridge Middle School, and Southridge High School (to the east) and less than two miles from Holland Elementary School (to the west). The Battery Storage System will be 0.26 miles (1,360') from the City of Huntingburg's ETJ, adjacent to a large tributary, will lie along a floodplain, and is surrounded by homes and farms. Both the Battery System and solar panels will be in the Airport's Aircraft Overlay District.

As mentioned in a letter provided to Mayor Elkins on October 21st, there are some significant safety and environmental drawbacks of this Battery Energy Storage System and Solar Panel project that warrant concern - including the risk of fire, toxic exposure to first responders or facility personnel, and the potential for explosion if flammable gases accumulate and ignite (as stated in the State of Indiana Utility-Scale Battery Energy Storage Study, Section 5.3.2)

While the causes of the Battery System risks were also presented to Mayor Elkins on October 21st, we are interested to hear your thoughts on how this will impact the limited resources of our fire departments - both volunteer and city. There have been fires at the solar farms in our neighboring counties. From our research and communication with those who have responded, the following must be done:

The response to a solar panel on fire: The solar farm operator of the system must be present to initiate the shutdown sequence or de-energize the system from the inverter (noting DC power will remain in the conduits and panels themselves). If the inverter is damaged, disconnects must be found and shut off. Again, this must be done by a solar farm operator (someone who may not live in this community). Once power is confirmed to be off, crews can suppress the fire, considering that burning solar panels and associated components release toxic chemicals, and the risk of electrocution remains. Due to the persistent electrical hazards, firefighters often adopt a defensive posture (spraying from a distance), oftentimes letting the fire burn out. We are of the understanding that if there is an incident where a vehicle were to drive through a security fence (chain link fence) and into the solar panel field, it would be extremely difficult to safely respond to the individuals involved.

A fire at the Battery System is another issue: Firefighter response to a large-scale (85 megawatt) Battery Energy Storage System fire primarily involves defensive operations, focusing on containment and exposure protection rather than direct extinguishment of the burning batteries. The key challenges are the risk of explosion, toxic gas release, and the difficulty of extinguishing lithium-ion thermal runaway events. If on fire, these fires cannot be extinguished - taking days or weeks to burn out.

A thermal runaway event occurred at a 10MW AES facility in Chandler, Arizona. This minor incident resulted in a freeway to be closed and businesses to be evacuated. The fire department was deployed to the facility for 13 days (April 18 - May 1), using two robots to monitor the smoldering facility. In 2019, nine first responders were injured in a similar battery incident in Surprise, Arizona.

Planning

On August 9th, 2023, Petition #2023-01 was introduced to the Huntingburg Board of Zoning Appeals. BP (who owned the project before being purchased by AES) submitted a petition as a Special Exception due to the Floodplain Hazard, also noting the proximity of the Huntingburg Airport and being within the Aircraft Overlay Zone. The Huntingburg Board of Zoning Appeals unanimously denied the request for the Special Exception. In summary, The Board of Zoning appeals found that this project WILL be detrimental to or endanger the public, health, safety, morals, or general welfare of the community, that if allowed the use and enjoyment of other property in the immediate vicinity WILL be affected negatively, and that this project WILL impede or substantially alter the normal and orderly development and improvement of surrounding property for uses allowed in the zoning district.

While I understand the importance of thoughtful renewable energy and supporting responsible innovation, I am concerned that this project is

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moving forward without clear alignment with the City’s long-term land use goals. A significant portion of the proposed Crossvine Solar Panel system lies within Huntingburg’s zoning authority. In conflict with the City of Huntingburg’s Comprehensive Plan: *Your Home, Your Huntingburg*, this project will go directly against Goal 1 and Goal 2 - eliminating areas of potential growth within Huntingburg’s 2-mile jurisdictional boundary, incompatible with the long-term vision of the community. If you want the next generation to remain in the city and build their life, living and working in this community, do you think these projects are the means of encouraging our young people to build their futures here?

This project represents a serious misuse of valuable land and emergency services, this sets a precedent for the use of Battery Storage Systems and commercial solar projects in and near the City of Huntingburg’s ETJ.

- The City of Huntingburg is responsible for upsizing structures and maintaining the results of increased watershed (as there will be an increase to the acres of impermeable area, increasing the time of concentration). This area drains into the same watershed as the City of Huntingburg. Has the impact of this development been mitigated to prevent worsened flooding conditions within city limits?
- Please note - this is new technology with limited awareness and reporting supporting the long-term impacts of large scale solar and battery energy storage systems. Many residents and local officials have not been fully informed about how these facilities function, how they are maintained, or what the end-of-life implications may be. Much

of the available data comes from developers themselves, with few independent or transparent reporting requirements. Currently, there is no consistent framework for monitoring system performance, fire, or safety incidents, or the condition of panels and batteries over time. The lack of oversight creates uncertainty about the true environmental and economic costs of these projects, especially once and if they reach the end of their 20 to 30-year-life span.

We would like to take this infrastructure seriously, and want to take this opportunity to make this information public. Stating that a significant increase in setbacks from schools, homes, utilities, streams, airports, and roadways have been some of the best proactive planning other cities and counties have executed to be effective against a devastating incident (going above the limited default setbacks).

We are pleading for your assistance to intervene - pause the project to assess the extent of the project, the risks, and any potential long term burden of this project in its entirety. As elected City Officials, each of you are setting the precedent for the current and the future generations of all portions of the City of Huntingburg.

Thank you for your time, your service, and your willingness to listen. I hope you will help protect the land, the people, the children, and the legacy of those who fought to protect this land we love so much, to keep our City of Huntingburg truly "A City Like No Other", and let us safely and honorably end our days at our beautiful homes. We plead to the council to adopt a

moratorium, to take this precautionary step to protect our community's interests and ensure that the currently proposed and future renewable energy development occurs responsibly and transparently.

In closing, we've have a few of questions in hopes we can better understand the current status of the Crossvine project:

- 72 of the 92 Indiana counties have a moratorium on solar panel projects. Have you considered putting a pause on the project due to any of the following reasons:
 - Public opposition and concerns
 - To create a new or amend existing ordinances
 - The lack of a Siting Plan with the City of Huntingburg
 - The risk, mitigation, and planning associated with a fire at a battery storage facility?
 - Please note - several communities and counties that have these projects throughout Indiana, have strengthened their ordinances since projects have come online (further setbacks, surety bonds to protect surrounding property values, etc.).

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- It's our understanding the city has a Solar Ordinance - Huntingburg Unified Development Ordinance, Chapter 4, Section L: Solar Energy System Standards (Accessory and Commercial)
 - Has the City considered strengthening the existing ordinance - increasing setbacks, noise restrictions, a process for citing large commercial solar generating facilities, etc.?
 - Has the City considered amending the approved usage for "Land Use - Agriculture District" to remove "solar energy system, commercial" as these are not agriculture? At the minimum, has the City considered changing "solar energy system, commercial" to a Special Exception Use, in the same category as a farmers market, confined feeding operation, or wind energy system, etc.?
 - Through significant amounts of research and in contacting the Indiana Department of Homeland Security, it is extremely difficult to find information on how this infrastructure is operating (to understand the frequency and impacts of when this infrastructure catches on fire/has thermal runaway events, etc.). How will the City ensure the safety of our emergency services in case the worst happens? How will the city ensure the safety of residences and the schools as many are within a 2 mile radius of the battery storage and solar fields?

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- What are the specific benefits this project is bringing to the City? It's not for energy, to my understanding the power generated and stored here is not staying here. It's not for property tax revenue - it's my understanding the project will be assessed as agriculture (providing the same revenue as it does today) or utility (providing less revenue than it does today). With the associated risk of this project, why is this project good for the City of Huntingburg and how is it furthering the community built strategic plan?