

APACHE COUNTY COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

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**PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION
MINUTES FOR June 25, 2025
Special Work Session**

Commissioners

District I

Carey Dobson
Bobby Fite
Brad Jarvis

District II

Kay Hauser
Dan Muth, Chair

District III

Brad Peterson, Vice-Chair
Bob Pollock
Travis Johnson

Alternate

Michael Bragiel

Staff Members in attendance

Matthew Fish, Director

Shanna Pearce, Plan Reviewer
Sarafina Farb, Permit Tech

Assessor's Office

Roxanne Drye, Appraiser III

Special Work Session

Meeting began at 4:00 p.m.

This special work session focused on reviewing and discussing Sections 436, 437, and 438 of the proposed Renewable Energy Ordinance. Definitions were held for a future session. The session aimed to shape the ordinance prior to a draft being presented to the Board of Supervisors. No formal action was taken.

Mr. Fish explained that public comments would be deferred until the end of the meeting.

The draft ordinance is not yet publicly available and will be released when ready for Board recommendation.

A future community Q&A meeting will be held in Alpine regarding the proposed Alpine commercial rezone Wednesday, July 23, 2025, at 4:00 p.m.

Renewable Ordinance discussion

Section 436 – Purpose & Applicability

Commissioners emphasized language supporting economic diversity for ranchers, noting renewable projects may help preserve intact ranches and prevent land fragmentation.

Discussion affirmed that property rights should be respected, provided land uses do not harm neighboring property owners.

Support was expressed for case-by-case evaluations through the Conditional Use Permit (CUP) process, regardless of location within “preferred” or “non-preferred” zones.

Re-zoning into industrial classifications for renewable projects was opposed due to scale and administrative burden.

Section 437 – Preferred Facility Locations

Mr. Fish presented the Apache County Preferred Energy Generation Area map.

Concerns were raised about conflicting setback requirements making designated preferred areas unusable. These discussions were deferred to future meetings.

Commissioners tentatively agreed to place preferred area language on the July agenda for possible inclusion in the Comprehensive Plan.

Questions were raised about defining preferred areas if every project is reviewed case-by-case. Staff explained the intent is to protect visual resources and manage impacts.

Mr. Fish introduced the Navajo County Renewable Energy Ordinance as a point of comparison.

Consultant Malena Hanna described Navajo County’s use of Development Agreements to secure infrastructure improvements, financial assurances, and performance conditions up front.

Commissioners expressed interest in reviewing Navajo County's approach due to geographic similarity.

Development Agreements were broadly supported by both commissioners and the public as a way to:

Secure cleanup and decommissioning funds. Manage road use and damage.
Increase transparency and accountability

Public concerns:

Visual impact, tourism, and property values. Energy company transparency and follow-through. Decommissioning costs and enforcement of bonding.
Protection for residential subdivisions surrounded by new commercial uses.

Economic perspectives:

Some advocated renewable energy as a tool for rural survival

Others worried about sacrificing tourism and scenic value for minimal long-term return

Public Comment

Speakers included ranchers, business owners, environmental advocates, and residents:

Advocated for private property rights and economic diversification

Urged protection of tourism assets and viewscapes

Called for strict decommissioning language and bond enforcement

Encouraged flexible ordinances and smart development

Some warned against overregulation, others cautioned against under-regulation

Action Items

Staff will compare the proposed Apache County ordinance to Navajo County's and report back at the July 10, 2025, regular meeting.

A follow-up special work session will be scheduled after the July 10 meeting to continue refining the ordinance, set during the July 10th working lunch session.

Preferred Energy Generation Areas will be discussed for Comprehensive Plan inclusion during a July working lunch session.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 5:30 p.m. MST.