



ST. JOE COUNTY BULLETIN JULY 2025

County Council

Public hearings are the 2nd Tuesday of the month

View the video: [July 8 public hearing](#)

ON AFFIRMATIVE ACTION

Amy Drake and Andy Rutten brought forward a bill to eliminate affirmative action language and any minority language from our county tax abatement ordinance. Two people spoke in favor. Dozens spoke against this decision.

- Highlights of remarks:
 - Trina Robinson of the NAACP reminded Ms. Drake that white women were the greatest beneficiaries of Affirmative Action; DEI and Affirmative Action are not the same.
 - Steve Francis helped craft the original Tax Abatement Ordinance which involved multiple stakeholders and Affirmative Action was important to all of them.
 - Several MAD members were there and several spoke.
 - Several members of We Make Indiana were there and spoke.
- Results:
 - Republicans Rutten, Drake, Schaetzle, Thomas, and Figg voted **Yes** despite Democrat Bryan Tanner's failed efforts to - at a minimum - amend the language using Civil Rights language.
 - All Democrats voted no.
 - Upon the vote which occurred at approximately **12:15 am**, the crowd booed loudly and shouted at the Republicans on the Council.

ON SOLAR

Dan Schaetzle sponsored a bill with unreasonable regulations of solar farms in St. Joseph County. This ordinance will kill any solar development while data centers will require massive amounts of electricity. Expect rate increases.

- Highlights of remarks:
 - A few homeowners in Walkerton and North Liberty spoke in favor
 - An attorney from Kosciusko County spoke about their own counties efforts to shut down solar and made false claims about their danger
 - A large number of people spoke against the ordinance including several members of We Make Indiana and MAD
 - Representatives from environmental groups spoke against this bill
 - Jeff Rea, President of the Chamber of Commerce, spoke against this bill.
- Results:
 - Rutten, Drake, Schaetzle, Thomas and Figg (all Republicans) voted yes.
 - All 4 Democrats voted no.
 - The bill is now an ordinance and will go back to the Area Plan Commission (APC).
 - If the APC approves the ordinance, it goes into effect. **The APC meeting is AUGUST 19 at 3:30 pm (unless they change the time to 1:30 pm).** This is government overreach! Lies are being spread about Solar Farms and this is a result.

Board of Commissioners:

The Commissioners meet weekly on Tuesdays

View the video: [July 15 meeting](#)

Note: the public is now allowed to address agenda items *before* the votes occur.

ON AFFIRMATIVE ACTION

The County Commissioners had an opportunity to veto the Council's change in the tax abatement decision.

- Highlights of remarks:
 - Tom Roe, a Vietnam veteran and local veterans activist, said that no evidence was given that this language prevents companies from investing in our area.
 - Carrie Bowie (MAD): Affirmative actions are building blocks for our community. Affirmative action = responsible Government.
 - John Hamilton: the operative language requires that employees have qualified workers: state code is consistent with affirmative action; equal opportunities are a civil right.

- Dan Kmitta (MAD): There are party loyalties, but do not approve this ordinance. There was no evidence presented. This ordinance is fascist!
- Trina Robinson, President of the NAACP: inaccurate information is not a basis for decisions. Cited statistics showing affirmative action is still needed.
- Alfred Guillaume (We Make Indiana): misconception that affirmative action is reverse discrimination.
- Mike McManus (MAD): this ordinance is nothing but a continuation of centuries of white supremacy.
- Cynthia Heckman-Davis (MAD): this ordinance will have a negative economic impact
- Several other community residents spoke in opposition.
- **No one** spoke in favor.
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- **Results:**
 - Carl Baxmeyer and Tony Hazen, the two Republican members voted in favor of the bill, in spite of expressing concerns about the language
 - Rafael Morton, the Democratic Commissioner, **voted to veto** the removal of affirmative action and minority language from the ordinance.
 - As Commissioner Morton asked, “Are we the legacy of Fr. Hesburgh or the KKK?”.

ON SOLAR

- The Commissioners were **unable to address** the solar ordinance because it is a zoning issue.
 - They have indicated that they **are opposed** to it and see it as harming economic development.
 - They will speak out at the Area Plan Commission meeting on August 19.

LOOKING AHEAD:

- *The Area Plan Commission meets on August 19 on the 4th floor of the County City Building to discuss the potential anti-solar legislation. Time? TBD*
- *The County Council will be voting on potential new language for the Tax Abatement Ordinance that will return some Civil Rights language to replace the Affirmative Action language. The meeting is at 6:00 pm on September 9 on the 4th floor of the County City building.*