

## Solar farm latest proposal for county's 85-acre parcel

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The 85-acre piece of property Monroe County owns in Bloomington could be a source of renewable energy and a job creator in the community if a new proposed use for the property moves forward.

A for-profit company, Solar Zentrum, submitted a late report to the county's environmental quality and sustainability commission asking it to consider a proposal that would utilize 15-20 acres for a five-megawatt solar farm on the property.

Though it is still in the planning stages, the Monroe County Board of Commissioners and members of the environmental quality commission agreed to move forward with the proposal this week.

I think this is something that I don't think we thought of; we can lease the site to for-profits, said Ashley Cranor, grants administrator for the county.

The county has been working with Solar Zentrum on a possible solar thermal system for the Monroe County Correctional Center, which was designated in the general obligation bond approved for 2014.

At the same time, the company was looking for a place in the county that could possibly house a solar farm of 4,000 to 5,000 panels.

Duke Energy issued a request for proposals for these types of solar farms, which would gather the energy and then sell it to Duke. The county property is near a transfer station, making it an ideal site.

Should the company be awarded the project by Duke, it could have a larger economic effect on Monroe County.

The added bonus is if they were to be awarded, they would be bringing their (solar panel) manufacturing plant with them, 211293 Cranor said.

Other projects have been slowed by some of the restrictions the property has. Whatever goes on the property should not have any cost to the county, be temporary and be self-sustaining. The size of the property means a large structure would require a road to accommodate traffic, along with sidewalks and drainage. Even a small structure would require some point of entry and a parking lot.

The infrastructure needed for a city planned unit development would take a \$3.5 million investment. Any project could potentially need approval from the county, the city of Bloomington and Duke Energy before moving forward.

For this particular project, though, some of those restrictions may not apply, and the solar farm may only need to use the small service road that runs through the property to access the panels for maintenance.

County officials still need to formally meet with city of Bloomington officials and Solar Zentrum to find out if there will be any other issues that could affect the solar farm going onto the property. There is a slight time crunch on the project 645 proposals are due to Duke on March 27.

Were trying to get some enthusiasm behind it, Cranor said.

The 85-acre Thomson property was purchased for \$1.27 million more than a decade ago with plans to build a juvenile detention and treatment facility there. A corrections campus, which would include a juvenile facility and a new jail, was also raised as a possibility, but nothing has been built.

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# Monroe County land proposal

