

Marshall County Zoning Commission Meeting Minutes

September 29, 2026

The Marshall County Zoning Commission met on the 29th day of September 2026, at 9:00 A.M. in Meeting Room 1 located on the 1st floor of the Marshall County Courthouse, 1 East Main Street, Marshalltown, Iowa.

Zoning Commission members present were Bill Hobson, Pat VonAhnen and William Wears.

Also in attendance was Tyler Kelley, Marshall County Zoning Administrator and 21 members of the public.

The meeting agenda is attached

The FIRST AGENDA ITEM was the approval of the September 29, 2026 agenda. VonAhnen made the motion to approve the agenda, Seconded by Wears.

Hobson- Aye, VonAhnen-Aye , Wears- Aye , motion passed 3-0

The SECOND AGENDA ITEM was the approval of the August 27, 2026 minutes. VonAhnen made the motion to approve the meeting minutes, Seconded by Wears.

Hobson- Aye, VonAhnen-Aye , Wears- Aye, motion passed 3-0

The THIRD AGENDA ITEM was discussion on Marshall County Renewable Energy Ordinance, ISU Workshop and suggested edits.

Tyler Kelley gave a presentation on the origins of the ordinance, process of drafting and sources used for information and ordinance structure. Kelley then presented on the ISU workshop that was held in July, the structure of the workshop and topics discussed. Kelley gave a brief overview of his goals for the meeting and the intended structure for the meeting and the edits he would like to cover. Zoning Director Tyler Kelly said the ordinance has been in development since September 2024.

Public Comment (5-minute limit)

Local residents: One couple opposed industrial wind development along the Iowa River corridor. They cited noise, shadow flicker, wildlife (nesting bald eagles), property values, and decommissioning costs. They supported a 3-mile setback from county parks, or at minimum the current 2 miles.

Inverenergy: It has 54 voluntary landowner agreements covering about 10,000 acres in the southeast part of the county. It said a 2-mile setback from all seven nearby conservation areas would eliminate 97% of those acres, and about 30% for Green Castle alone. It estimated the project at roughly 175 MW with about 50 turbines, and said the county would lose about \$1M/year in revenue if the project is blocked.

Marshall County Conservation (Director Emily Herring):

Position: Conservation supports green energy and recommended a 3-mile setback from wildlife and recreation areas, with willingness to support no less than 2 miles. It also recommended 3 miles from the Iowa River floodplain and from documented endangered species.

Waivers: She offered case-by-case waivers and said low-value areas, such as small city parks, could be flexible.

Wildlife concerns: Endangered bats and eagles, and two bat mitigation sites already in the county.

Recreation concerns: She cited a \$1.8M Green Castle campground investment, a new observatory, and a survey in which 51% of park users said they would visit less if turbines were nearby.

Landowners and farmers: Several supported the wind projects. They said setbacks are too restrictive, that they have seen little wildlife harm near existing turbines, and that the projects bring income.

Scout Clean Energy: Its northwest project is “extremely unlikely” to be built under the draft as written. It asked for science-based, site-specific setbacks instead of a flat distance. It also asked that conservation setbacks be locked in before permitting, for example through an early conservation agreement, so a late land donation couldn’t derail a project. It estimated 70–85 turbines, \$4–5M/year to landowners, and about \$175M in county tax revenue over 35 years.

Alliant Energy (no project in the county):

Wind setbacks: It called 3 miles from conservation areas unheard of and said 1 to 1.5 miles is more standard.

FAA/FCC: Drop provisions the FAA and FCC already regulate, and require aircraft detection lighting “unless not allowed by the FAA.”

Roads and decommissioning: Use a road use agreement with a third-party engineer, and require an Iowa-licensed engineer for decommissioning plans.

Solar: Raise the residential setback to 350–400 ft, use standard zoning setbacks from roads, and lower the panel height requirement to 18 in.

Agricultural impact plan: The agricultural impact mitigation plan, including soil sampling, is overly burdensome.

Ordinance structure: It cautioned against giving one person veto-like control over setbacks.

Other points raised:

Interconnection agreements: Scout said requiring signed interconnection agreements with the permit application comes too early. It suggested requiring them for the building permit instead.

Decommissioning security: The timing of decommissioning security is another concern.

City setback: A landowner near State Center asked about relaxing the 1-mile setback from city limits.

Key Discussion Points

Setbacks and waivers: The draft sets a 2-mile setback from conservation areas, versus the Conservation Board’s 3-mile request. Developers want certainty on which waivers will be granted before they commit large sums. Kelley said the ordinance can’t list individual parks because new parks are added over time, and he will ask the county attorney whether waivers or agreements can be signed before the conditional use permit documentation is submitted.

Non-participating landowners: The proposed setback is 2.2 times turbine height.

Tower height: New towers may reach 600–700 ft, versus about 550 ft for existing ones.

Data centers: A separate ordinance is in progress, and a 6-month moratorium is in place on new data centers.

Action Items

Kelley will consult the county attorney on early waivers and conservation agreements, waivers for city setbacks, and the timing of vesting rights.

Developers will send follow-up information, including Invenergy's exact megawatt figure.

Herring will provide bat survey data (it is being added to NABAT, the North American Bat Monitoring Program database).

An Iowa DNR renewable energy guidance document is expected in a couple of weeks and will be shared.

The commission will revise the draft based on public input.

Meeting Schedule

November 17, 9:00 a.m.: Renewable energy ordinance, same location and streamed online. The agenda and packet with suggested changes will be posted one week prior.

October 20th: Data center ordinance meeting.