

DRAFT
TOWN OF WEATHERSFIELD, VERMONT
MINUTES OF PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING
Monday, 9 March, 2020

Planning Commission: Howard Beach, Brandon Gulnick (Town Manager), Paul Tillman, Michael Todd, Julia Lloyd Wright (Energy Coordinator, ex-officio)
Visitors: Ralph Meima (Green Lantern Solar), Fred Kowalik, Nikita Lenahan (Residents)

I. Call to Order by Vice-Chair, Paul Tillman at 7:25pm

II. Agenda Review - 9 March, 2020

A motion was made by Howard Beach to table Item 4 'Election of Officers (Chair, Vice Chair, Clerk', seconded by Michael Todd. Voted: Unanimously

A motion was made by Michael Todd to Table Item 5 'Appoint Recording Secretary', seconded by Howard Beach. Voted: Unanimously

A motion was made by Howard Beach to table Item 10 'Zoning Bylaw Updates' -

Status spreadsheet review; (b) Conservation of Natural Resources bylaw - Riparian Buffers; (c) Changes to zoning map; (d) Evaluation of, and, possible changes to definitions in zoning bylaws, seconded by Michael Todd. Voted: Unanimously.

This item is being tabled so that Jason Rasmussen can be present during discussions.

A motion was made by Howard Beach to move Item 8 'Proposed 500kW Solar Project at 1465 Route 106, Walters' to Item 4, seconded by Michael Todd. Voted: Unanimously.

III. Comments from Citizens -

Paul Tillman said the term for current Chair, Nancy Heatley expires and she will be stepping down. Paul Tillman said his time has also expired, he will be joining Michael Todd on the Selectboard and is undecided as to whether he will continue to serve on the Planning Commission or step down.

There is an open seat on the Planning Commission.

The Town is looking for a Zoning Administrator and still accepting applications.

Jason Rasmussen, Senior Planner (SWCRPC) Southern Windsor County Regional Planning Commission, is under contract to the Town to help with the vacant Land Use Office.

If anyone in town is interested in serving on the Planning Commission they should contact Town Manager, Brandon Gulnick.

VIII. Proposed 500kW Solar Project at 1465 Route 106, Walters

Ralph Meima, Green Lantern Solar, would like to submit a file for the development and his company is currently waiting to receive a letter with the Preferred Site Checklist so they can work on it.

VI. Approval of Meeting Minutes - 24 February, 2020

A motion was made by Michael Todd to approve the Minutes of 24 February, 2020, seconded by Howard Beach. Voted: Unanimously.

VII. Discussion of Revised Preferred Site Checklist and PUC Rule 5.103

The Planning Commission reviewed an updated draft of the Checklist revised by Jason Rasmussen following the meeting on 24 February, 2020.

Abutters to the property in question should be notified before the Planning Commission considered a Preferred Site Letter.

Planning Commission will evaluate all aspects of the project, including proposed location, clearing activity, solar arrays, fencing, access roads, and interconnection with 3-phase power lines.

The Letter asks if the project is less than one-mile from the 3-phase power line but Ralph Meima said it could be less than one-thousand feet.

The Letter also asks about negative aesthetic impacts along major travel corridors and scenic viewsheds and neighboring properties.

The latest amended version of the Weathersfield Town Plan dated 2017 references the Elizabeth Thompson Study "Biological Natural Areas of Weathersfield, Vermont" published in 1992 which may be used for identifying areas of significant resources. Endangered species and deer yards should be taken into consideration.

There was a discussion on numbers of solar arrays and the distance between existing and proposed sites and how to set a distance which was not arbitrary. Paul Tillman said he was not opposed to solar projects.

Michael Todd asked Ralph Meima about decommissioning when the contract had reached its end of life and could no longer be used, this would be separate from the Checklist.

Ralph Meima said the design could make sure the growth of trees and wildlife could be taken into consideration as there was a dual use around a site for enhancement and the Town could request certain fencing. It was agreed that wording would be added to protect clearcutting on forested land.

Other suggestions included creating language for the Town and developer to spell out conditions in the amount of allowable clearing of trees.

When the Planning Commission has finished with the evaluation the Selectboard will sign the Letter.

Jason Rasmussen will have a further Draft Letter available for the next meeting on 23 March, 2020.

IX. Zoning Amendment Petition

- (a) Review Draft Written Report
- (b) Review Changes for "Technical Deficiency"
- (c) Schedule Public Hearing

The Planning Commission set the date to warn a public hearing on the petition for a proposed Zoning Bylaw amendment from Doug Reed of Mountain and Valley Firewood.

This amendment request will not be voted by Australian Ballot.

The hearing will take place on at 7pm on the 13 April, 2020 at Martin Hall in Ascutney, VT. Notification by Certified Mail will be sent to Doug Reed and his attorney.

XIII. Next Agenda 23 March, 2020

Election of Officers (Chair, Vice-Chair, Clerk)

Appointment Recording Secretary

Approval of Meeting Minutes 9 March, 2020

Bylaw updates - Status spreadsheet review

Discussion of Preferred Site Checklist Letter

Review Planning Commission Maps with suggested changes.

XI. Executive Session - Personnel

A motion was made by Michael Todd to go into Executive Session with Town Manager, Brandon Gulick at 9:10pm, seconded by Howard Beach.

XII. Adjourn

A motion was made to adjourn at 9:45pm by Paul Tillman, seconded by Mike Todd. Voted: unanimously