

FINAL
TOWN OF WEATHERSFIELD, VERMONT
MINUTES OF PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING
Monday, 24 February, 2020

Planning Commission: Howard Beach, Brandon Gulnick (Town Manager), Tyler Harwell, Jason Rasmussen (Acting Land Use Administrator), Paul Tillman, Julia Lloyd Wright (Energy Coordinator, ex-officio)
Visitors: Ralph Meima (Green Lantern Solar), Fred Kowalik and Nikita Lenahan (Residents)

I. Call to Order by Vice-Chair, Paul Tillman at 6:59pm

II. Agenda Review - 24 February, 2020

III. Comments from Citizens - None

IV. Approval of Meeting Minutes - 27 January, 2020 and 10 February, 2020

A motion was made by Tyler Harwell to approve the Minutes of 27 January, 2020, seconded by Howard Beach. Voted: Unanimously.

A motion was made by Howard Beach to approve the Minutes of 10 February, 2020, seconded by Tyler Harwell. Voted: Unanimously.

V. Discussion of Preferred Site Checklist and PUC Rule 5.103.

A draft of the proposed checklist was discussed with additional suggested criteria not already included in the 2017 (and most recently amended) Town Plan. The 'preferred site' checklist would pertain to ground-mounted solar projects with a cap of 500kW. Both the Planning Commission and the Selectboard will evaluate the proposed project and the Town will issue the preferred site determination.

Among the considerations reviewed were: Projects located less than a mile from three-phase power line; consistent with land use goals - the Town Plan is important when considering zoning issues; undue adverse impact on already identified important scenic resources; mitigation of any negative impact on travel corridors, scenic viewsheds and neighboring properties; impact on Historic Places or resources listed in the Town Plan, referenced in the Thompson Field Study; fragmentation of forest blocs, wildlife habitation and travel corridors; wetlands and buffer areas and does not negatively impact safety and operation of the Hartness State airport.

Additional suggestions include: distance between existing and proposed sites; securing a landowner decommissioning fund and amount of allowable clearing of trees.

Ralph Meima pointed out that without a Preferred Site designation the developer/landowner project "will not work."

Tyler Harwell mentioned concerns of proliferation with invasive species and their control.

Regarding the decommissioning of the panels Ralph Meima said at the present time they are guaranteed for a 25-year lifespan but are "good" to 37 years. There will be a big need in Vermont to decommission panels as some are beginning to reach their limit. They are currently being crushed, not toxic but do contain copper which could be recaptured. Damaged panels on arrays will be returned to manufacturers and replaced with new ones.

Tyler Harwell said that decommissioning is very important but Ralph Meima said if they are not removed then they will just sit there. Vermont law governing MW arrays requires a bond and panels to be removed. It is up to the landowner to take care of decommissioning. Tyler Harwell suggested that a reserve account be set up in advance using revenues for decommissioning.

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

Paul Tillman would like Michael Todd to review an updated version of the checklist. This will be on the agenda for the next meeting on 9 March, 2020.

VII. Petition for zoning bylaw amendments - Processing of Firewood

The Planning Commission received a petition from Doug Reed (Mountain and Valley Firewood) on 13 February, 2020 requesting a change in the by-laws regulating firewood and to be voted by Australian Ballot. The petition deals with a zoning ordinance and has to go through the procedures in 24 V.S.A. Chapter 117 which requires the Planning Commission to warn a public hearing before going to the selectboard. The Planning Commission are only authorized to make changes with technical deficiencies. A written report will be prepared on the proposed changes and hearing scheduled, following the hearing the Commission may make a recommendation before sending the proposal to the Selectboard. Comments with concerns were voiced regarding the wording of the petition which would give firewood processors 'carte blanche' with no regulation up to 25 acres, installations of smokestacks and any installations with such processing were of concern, such businesses belong in highway commercial and not residential. A letter will be discussed at the next meeting and approved.

VIII. Audio recordings of meetings

The Planning Commission discussed taping meetings, it was suggested that some pertinent meetings, such as public hearings might be taped but not every meeting on a regular basis. The Planning Commission will talk to the Town Manager.

IX. Zoning Bylaw Updates

- (a) Conservation of Natural Resources bylaw - Riparian buffers
- (b) Changes to zoning map
- (c) Evaluation of and possible changes to definitions in zoning bylaws

A motion was made by Tyler Harwell to forward six bylaws with changes to the Selectboard with recommendations, seconded by Howard Beach. Voted: Unanimously.

X. Next Agenda, 9 March, 2020

Bylaw updates - Status spreadsheet review
Discussion of Preferred Site Checklist Letter
Petition for Zoning Bylaw Amendments (processing firewood) Letter
Review Planning Commission Maps with suggested changes

XI. Adjourn

A motion was made by Tyler Harwell to adjourn at 8:30pm, seconded by Howard Beach. Voted: Unanimously