

FINAL
TOWN OF WEATHERSFIELD, VERMONT
MINUTES OF PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING
Monday, 24 June, 2019

I. Call to Order - Vice-Chair, Paul Tillman called the meeting to order at 7:05pm.
Planing Commission: Howard Beach, Sven Fedorow (Land Use Administrator), Tyler Harwell, Paul Tillman, Michael Todd, Julia Lloyd Wright (Energy Coordinator, ex-officio)
Visitors: Ed Morris, Town Manager; Jeff Spurr, Willis Wood, Jason Worrall, Kathy Merlau, Robin Davidson, Nancy Reed, Walter Morancy, Todd Hindinger, Douglas Reed, Dillin Reed, Ethan McNaughton, Nate Stearns (Town Attorney), Adam Bates, Mike McLaughlin, J. McLaughlin, Gary and Edith Plumley; Town solar project: Nikita Lenahan, Fred Kowalik

II. Agenda Review - 24 June, 2019

III. Public Hearing - Proposed bylaw - Processing of Agricultural Forestry Products
"I. The following shall be added to Section 4.32(e) as a Permitted Principal Use in a Conservation (C-10) District:
Processing of Agricultural/Forestry Products (see definitions)
II. The following shall be added to Section 8 Definitions:
Processing of Agricultural Products: The primary processing of agricultural and forestry products of commercial value whether the processing occurs at the site where the product was harvested or at a site that is not the harvest site."

Vice-Chair Paul Tillman opened the Public Hearing at 7:06pm. Paul Tillman read the Notice of Public Hearing "In accordance with the provisions of 24 V.S.A. s/s 4441(d) and 4444, the Planning Commission for the Town of Weathersfield, Vermont, will hold a public hearing on Monday, June 24, 2019, at 7:00P.M., in the Weathersfield Town Office, at 5259 Route 5 in Ascutney, Vermont, to hear public comments on the adoption of the following bylaw:

(1) Addition of Processing of Agricultural/Forestry Products as a Permitted Principal Use in the Conservation (C-10) Zoning District

Statement of Purpose

The above referenced bylaw has been proposed by petition pursuant to 24 V.S.A. s/s 4442.

Geographic Areas Affected

The entire Town of Weathersfield is affected by this amendment

The full text of the above bylaw and written report is available for inspection at the Weathersfield Town Office."

In the Planning Commission Reporting Form for Municipal Bylaw Amendments under Item 2. it is stated that "It is the opinion of the Planning Commission that the proposal does not conform with nor does it further the goals and policies contained in the Municipal Plan ..."

Paul Tillman said the hearing is specifically called to focus on the bylaw and not to discuss the case brought by Douglas Reed currently being decided at the Environmental Court.

Douglas Reed said there is no paper mill in Weathersfield for over 100 years and ethanol is only in the Mid-West but I can do firewood citing what the newly proposed bylaw would allow in a C-10 zone. Sven Fedorow said that in analyzing the bylaw referenced, if it is adopted it could open up a large scope as the language is overly broad.

In the Planning Commission Report item 3 - is the proposal compatible for future land uses and densities of the Municipal Plan? It states the near complete lack of restrictions on any undertaking or business which could come within the scope of this bylaw ... would enable industrialization of what the Town intends to be the most protected zoning district.

Douglas Reed said that 85 percent of the town wants to use firewood and it's a perfect location and central hub.

Speaking to item 2 - How does the proposal conform with or further the goals of the Municipal Plan including the effects on the availability of safe and affordable housing: Ethan McNaughton spoke about putting commercial traffic in residential areas and the impact on rural areas, no conditional use in rural areas with no restrictions, this use is an opportunity to allow industry with no limit on scope.

Douglas Reed said the road can handle traffic and the trucks along the road and the Plains Road is being upgraded because of the traffic opening up more to businesses. Lucas McLaughlin cited the use by fuel delivery trucks and the pollution and would like to see more leniency to be self-sufficient not trying to preserve and turn away business.

Other comments included bringing more industry to Weathersfield.

Nancy Reed said the kids want to stay in Weathersfield, we ran soapstone in Amsden and we want progress. Dillin Reed said you already have noise pollution from the (Cersosimo) rock crusher.

Michael Todd said the Town voted to keep zoning and has made changes and you have to work with the State Statutes. The Planning Commission is not here to take away business and invited those present to participate in meetings. We post meeting notices, we meet to discuss bylaws and nobody comes to listen or comment.

Paul Tillman said people can get on the agenda for Planning Commission meetings, the selectboard will vote on this proposed bylaw but we still want to hear from you.

Paul Tillman closed the hearing at 8:11pm.

A motion was made by Michael Todd to forward the bylaw and bylaw report as submitted to the selectboard, seconded by Howard Beach. Voted: Unanimously.

V. Continuation of discussion - Solar developments - Norwich Solar Technologies, Inc.

*Proposed solar array developments at Transfer Station and Highway Garage properties.

Ed Morris distributed a map of the latest drawing showing Norwich Solar Technologies, Inc., proposed project at the Town Transfer Station. There was no representative from the solar project at the meeting.

Reports are being finalized prior to submission to the PUC (Public Utilities Commission).

Fred Kowalik said he had concerns regarding the Planning Commission, Regional Planning and the selectboard and worried a decision will be left to the PUC.

Discussion covered the State plan to reach their projected goal for a renewable energy and the PUC might be pushing solar installations to meet the target.

Tyler Harwell said there was lots of land for development, farm land is sacred and prime ag. soils, which prevents doing anything other than farm where solar development has difficulty using old farm fields. Sven Fedorow said different standards apply to solar developments than those which apply under Act 250.

Howard Beach said there are no restrictions where power is sold out of state and the power is cheaper down in Connecticut than in Vermont.

Ed Morris said the, previously discussed, stormwater issue for the Transfer Station site won't get any worse and will need to be addressed whether the project goes ahead or not.

VI. Approval of Meeting Minutes - 28 May, 2019 and 10 June, 2019

A motion was made by Tyler Harwell to approve the Minutes of 28 May, 2019, seconded by Howard Beach. Voted: Unanimously

A motion was made by Michael Todd to approve the Minutes of 10 June, 2019, seconded by Howard Beach. Voted: Unanimously (Tyler Harwell abstained)

X. Adjourn

A motion was made by Michael Todd to continue remaining items on the agenda to the next meeting, seconded by Howard Beach. Voted: Unanimously

A motion was made by Michael Todd to adjourn at 9:00pm, seconded by Howard Beach. Voted: Unanimously