



TOWN OF WAKEFIELD, NEW HAMPSHIRE

Planning Board Minutes

July 2, 2020

APPROVED

Zoom Meeting #5

MEMBERS		ALTERNATES		OTHERS	
Tom Dube, Chair	X	Donna Martin		Victor Vinagro, Building Inspector/Code Enforcement Officer	X
Dick DesRoches, Vice Chair	X	John Blackwood			
Charlie Edwards, Selectmen's Representative	X			Mike Garrepy, Planning Consultant	
David Silcocks, Member				Richard Sager, Town Counsel	
Doug Stewart	X				

Others present: Mike Redding, Jim Miller and Ted Taylor of Clearview Community TV.

Pledge of Allegiance & Call the meeting to order

Chairman Dube called the meeting to order at 7:06.

Seat Alternates as necessary

No alternates were present.

Public Comment

None

Public Hearings

None

Conceptual Review

Michael Redding for NE Solar Garden for Tax Map 100-4, Wht. Mtn. Hgwy, Solar Array project.

Mr. Redding is Director of Engineering for New England Solar Garden, located in Portsmouth. They have been in business for ten years and they focus on New Hampshire. Their projects are from 1 megawatt up to 5 megawatts. They have been working with many communities around Wakefield to bring solar energy to New Hampshire. He realizes that this is not a permitted use in Wakefield but could be with a Conditional Use Permit. He's here tonight to tell the Board about the project and get their initial feedback. The parcel is located just south of Wontons Restaurant. He explained the plan using maps. He also showed pictures of the Array. He explained that the units will be fixed tilt. Water runoff is controlled, and any soil disturbed is fixed using native

seed mixes to grow a meadow that is the height of the Array. All setbacks will easily be met. He explained how the wiring is connected to each panel and then connects to the co-op utility poles. They propose a gravel drive. To meet the National Electric Code the two areas will have a seven-foot fence around each Array. They will be adding another gravel access. The Arrays will be three feet from the bottom to twelve feet at the top in their sitting position. They will need to cut trees to manage the shade. They will be cutting trees in the wetlands but not disturbing the wetlands. The fire department will be given a key for quick access. They will reach out to the fire department to see if they need any additional equipment like arc flash gloves to turn off the power switch in the event of an emergency. The risk of a fire is low, there are no flammable materials in the Array.

Mr. DesRoches asked who they would be selling power to. They're hoping to connect with an off taker in New Hampshire. They are also looking into the Community Choice Aggregate Rule that was just passed which allows municipalities to go out to market for a power purchase agreement for all their residents. There are several communities in New Hampshire doing that and that's what they are targeting. The project will be about 2 megawatts when completed. It's basically a spec project. Mr. Edwards asked what benefit the Town of Wakefield will receive. Mr. Redding said if the community chooses the Community Choice Aggregate program there could be a benefit from the cheaper rates. He said at this point there is no direct benefit unless communities sign up for the Community Choice Aggregate Program. He said by Wakefield approving this project they will be supporting renewable energy. Another benefit would be that this would be a taxable property and if it's now in Current Use they will compensate for the withdrawal from Current Use. They will not impact any municipal services. Mr. Edwards asked if it was providing Wakefield with any electricity at this moment. Mr. Redding replied, there is no agreement with the Town of Wakefield at this time.

Mr. Vinagro asked if they will be using existing lines to transport the power or will there be new power lines? Mr. Redding responded that there will be power lines that will go up. He explained how the electricity gets into the grid. Mr. Dube told Mr. Redding that he was an abutter and another solar company has approached him to do the same thing on his land. To clarify, Mr. Dube said there are no poles and lines going down the road, just the poles and lines to tie into the grid. Mr. Dube asked, no matter who you're selling the power to is it a possibility our rates won't go up? Mr. Redding said there's a potential it could come down. Mr. Redding explained the bills that Concord has been looking at. Right now, there is a limit on the megawatts.

Mr. DesRoches said in the long-term solar farms will be a benefit but not in the short term as far as rates go. He has two concerns he'd like to see addressed. He said you have a close southernly neighbor and would like to see some kind of screening. Across the street there is a 30-40 housing development. Mr. Redding said because of the lay of the land you will not be able to see visually into the property. The land is sloped up, but it would be visible from the road. Mr. DesRoches said on Route 16 there has to be a natural landscape buffer so it can't be seen from the highway. The land drains into Scribner Brook. Mr. Redding explained how these Arrays will not add groundwater runoff by using a system called disconnected impervious cover. Mr. DesRoches asked, would it be your position that no additional water will reach the wetland as a result of this solar farm? Mr. Redding replied yes. Mr. DesRoches wants to see something specific to this site

that says the panels will not impact the wetlands along with some screening so that the neighbors don't see the panels. He is not speaking for the Board he is speaking for himself. Mr. Dube said this is a Conceptual Review and nothing said here tonight is binding on either party. Mr. Dube has no problem with the runoff from the panels because they are displacing the first fifteen feet, it runs down and goes under the next panels. In the duff area it is not going to alter the terrain. So, the water moves fifteen feet from the first panel, and it moves down. He doesn't have a problem with the runoff from the panels because of the way the water is displaced. Mr. Dube asked how much area are they planning to cover. Mr. Redding said about ten acres all together and they plan to do a formal evaluation of the current runoff and the proposed runoff. They also have to construct stormwater retention basins.

Mr. Dube asked, who inspects your work? Mr. Redding answered co-op would inspect the electrical portion and Code Enforcement or the State would inspect the rest depending on the municipality's officers' experience and knowledge. Mr. Dube said you will also need a Wetland Impact Permit. Mr. Stewart asked what type of solar panels he would be using. He said the typical silicon wafer panels. Mr. Stewart asked about the possibility of flying balloons on the proposed site so abutters could see if it impacted their views at all. Mr. Redding said, absolutely, he's done that before. Mr. DesRoches is concerned about the field being abandoned when the life of the Arrays ceases to be useful. Mr. Redding said those installed in the 70's and 80's are still functioning and continue to pay off. The landowner is also concerned. They will decommission. If after thirty years, the landowner wants to do something else with the land they remove everything. Mr. Stewart said we may want to have some conditions around decommissioning.

Mr. Dube believes they can go forward with a Conditional Use Permit if Mr. Redding has all the applicable permits and he personally, doesn't think it needs a major site plan. He thinks the screening could be a big issue with a couple of the abutters, He also feels there should be a site walk before the Conditional Use Permit with visuals there for the Board, abutters and public to get an idea of what it will look like. He doesn't believe the Planning Board has any jurisdiction over field abandonment and the business aspect of the project. Also, he has to meet the seven criteria for a Conditional Use Permit.

Mr. DesRoches is concerned that if Board doesn't look at this as a site plan review process where you can make judgements for things like runoffs and screening there's a problem. He is in favor of this but wants to make sure they cover all the possibilities and public concerns. When it was put in zoning the thought was for a residential solar array, this is more like a business. They have to determine if this business can exist in an agricultural zone. Mr. Redding said a lot of towns are making accommodations for solar that's 1- 5 megawatts. It's either a zoning special exception or a conditional use. Mr. Dube said we can review this with the Town Attorney or Planning Consultant. Mr. DesRoches wants the public to be able to be involved and a site plan review is the way to accomplish that. He will go along with whatever the Town Attorney and Mike Garrepy determine.

Mr. Stewart would like balloons to see what the visible impact might be from the highway and the housing development across the street. Mr. Redding suggested a test spot in an existing clearing to see what this may look like. Mr. Edwards is not in favor of this kind of set up but is

also not against it. His problem with this business is that it gives no benefits to the Town. He has an issue with that although he has no issue with anyone wanting to do as they wish with their land. He's not sure he can support the project when there is no benefit to the citizens of Wakefield. Mr. Dube replied to Mr. Edwards saying it either meets our zoning or doesn't. Mr. Edwards said speaking as a private citizen he doesn't know why we'd want it if we are not benefiting from it.

As a resident, Mr. Vinagro said he agrees 100% with Mr. DesRoches and he totally agrees with Mr. Edwards. He doesn't understand why this wouldn't be a major site plan with a conditional use permit if it's in our regs. He believes the public needs to be involved. Mr. Dube said there will be some research that takes place and they will have some information for Mr. Redding at the next meeting. The Chairman closed the Conceptual Review at 8:20.

Board Business

Sign mylar for Province lake Rd Holdings/Old Stage Rd. Holdings Lot Consolidation/
Boundary Line adjustment.

These will be signed right after the meeting.

Correspondence

Mr. Dube suggested that the Board watch the following zoom meeting as Mr. Berry will be at the Wakefield Planning Board meeting on the 16th.

Notice is hereby given that the Milton Planning Board will hold a Public Hearing on **Tuesday, July 7, 2020 commencing at 6:30PM.** The applicant's proposal is a three-lot frontage subdivision on Tax Map 1, Lot 3. The parent parcel is 30.22 acres in size that is used for a single-family residential residence. The proposal is to subdivide off 2 additional lots leaving the house lot at 5 .44 Ac. This property takes all its frontage off Route 109/Lovell lake Road in Wakefield and has no frontage in the Town of Milton. Applicant; Berry Surveying, Owner; Chester Czepyha.

Mr. Miller offered to record the Milton meeting if he can get the credentials so the Board members can watch it at their convenience. Mr. Dube thanked Mr. Miller for getting the last meeting up so quickly.

Public comment

None

Approval of previous meeting minutes

Mr. DesRoches made a motion, seconded by Mr. Stewart, to approve the minutes of June 18, 2020. Roll call vote (3-0-1)

Set next meeting date

July 16, 2020

Adjournment

Mr. Stewart made a motion, seconded by Mr. Edwards, to adjourn the meeting at 8:27.

Roll call vote (4-0)

Respectfully submitted for approval at the next Planning Board meeting,

Priscilla Colbath
Planning Board Secretary