

TOWN OF SKOWHEGAN
PLANNING BOARD
MEETING MINUTES
July 19, 2022
6:00 P.M.
Municipal Building, Council Room

PRESENT:

Steve Conley, Chairman
Steve St. Pierre, Vice-chairman
Stephen Gould, Secretary
Harvey Austin
Matt Smith
Dan Luce, Alternate
Joel Greenwood, Planner
Cynthia Kirk, Recording Secretary

ABSENT: Jeff McCabe, Derek Chretien

PUBLIC PRESENT:

Bryan Belliveau, CEO
Kristen Tarr, ENGIE
Mark Christopher, TRC Companies, LLC
Alan Shirley, TRC Companies, LLC
Nikki Knowlton
Dale Knowlton

1) QUORUM:

Planning Board Meeting called to order at 6:00 P.M. Quorum was present.

2) MINUTES OF THE June 7, 2022 PLANNING BOARD MEETING TO BE APPROVED:

Motion by Dan Luce to approve the June 7, 2022 Planning Board meeting minutes, as written. Seconded by Steve St. Pierre. Motion passed 4-0-1. (Harvey Austin abstained)

3) SITE PLAN / SUBDIVISION:

A) Discussion of the Site Inventory & Analysis submitted by TRC Companies, LLC on behalf of ENGIE Distributed Renewables Development, LLC for the proposed 1.99 MW solar energy production facility to be located on the Middle Road (Assessor's Map 9, Lot 42).

Kristen Tarr and Mark Christopher gave a brief presentation on the proposed solar array project to be located on the Middle Road. Steve Conley asked if there were any questions about this project.

Harvey Austin asked them to please work nicely with the neighbors during this project. He said they have a couple companies that haven't worked the best with the abutting property owners regarding buffering issues. Kristen Tarr said they plan on making sure that this project will be barely noticeable to the neighbors and it also helps that it will be located in the middle of a largely wooded parcel already.

Steve Conley asked where their nearest project is located to Skowhegan. Kristen Tarr said that they have 4 projects up in the county right now so the closest one to here would be in Caribou.

Joel Greenwood said that this developer has requested two waivers for certain required documents for them to look at as well. The first one is a request to be able to use a geotechnical study in place of the required high intensity soil survey. The second is asking to forgo the required visual impact assessment because the project is pretty much going to be surrounded by trees from the start.

Steve Conley asked what kind of trees are on this property that will be providing the buffering for this project. Mark Christopher said it is a pretty equal variety of hard and soft wood trees such as maples, birch, oaks etc. Steve also asked what if anything would prevent the landowner from harvesting the trees that will act as the buffer for the solar array. Mr. Christopher said there isn't anything that would prevent them from doing that. However, it isn't typical for a landowner to clear cut a property in order for them to continue making money by doing smaller harvesting.

Dan Luce asked if they have any information on the equipment such as SDS sheets. Kristen said she doesn't have them with him but he can get them to the Planning Board if they like.

Steve Conley asked to discuss the waiver requests. Joel asked them to describe the geotechnical study and how that would compare to the required high intensity soil survey. Mark explained that the geotechnical study is basically just like a high intensity soil survey but just in specific spots on the property. It would actually look at the structural aspects of the soil in these certain spots instead of just a general soil survey.

Steve Conley asked if anybody else had any questions. Dale Knowlton asked if there is any potential for future growth of this solar array. Kristen Tarr said that they don't intend on expanding this project in the future. Joel said that if there is any expansion in the future then it would have to come back to the Planning Board for review again.

Steve St. Pierre asked if they have already sold the energy. Kristen Tarr said that they do have a commercial subscriber for the energy that will be produced.

Kristen Tarr also reviewed the project schedule for construction.

Joel spoke about the waiver request to not have to do the visual assessment. He said the reasoning that they have given to waive that is because all that it will show is the trees that will be surrounding the project. His thought is that the visual assessment should still be done even if it does just show the trees to prove that it will not be visible.

Steve Conley asked if they have had to do visual impact studies before. Mark Christopher said they have and it really isn't that expensive to do. He said sometimes they can be misleading depending on where you are located doing them.

Motion by Matt Smith to grant the waiver to allow them to submit a geotechnical study in place of a high intensity soil survey. Seconded by Steve St. Pierre. Motion passed 4-0-1 (Stephen Gould abstained).

Motion by Steve St. Pierre to deny the waiver request to not have to provide the visual impact study. Seconded by Matt Smith. Motion passed 4-0-1 (Stephen Gould abstained).

Joel explained the next steps in the Site Plan process. Mr. Christopher asked if they would like to do a site visit. Harvey said not until the road is in. Everyone agreed.

Stephen Gould left the meeting at 6:48 pm.

4) ITEMS BY THE PUBLIC:

None

5) COMMUNICATIONS:

A) Letter from Shelter Group Inc.

Steve Conley read the letter received. They are looking to decommission the hydrant in the fire pond located adjacent to Mountain View Terrace on Dartmouth Street. Joel said he believes this would need to go to either the fire department or highway department. Bryan said he believes that they are asking the Planning Board because this is within a subdivision that was approved by the Planning Board. Bryan said that NFPA requires this hydrant so it is probably going to have to stay in place. He said that he will speak with the fire chief tomorrow and they can respond with a letter.

B) Letter from Sally Rollins

Steve Conley said this letter is regarding her concerns about pedestrian traffic around the shopping center on the Southside of town along Route 201 near the intersection. He said it sounds like this would need to be addressed by the Selectmen. Bryan said he walked the pedestrian bridge over there a couple weeks ago and he has communicated some of the issues to the highway department because there are some spots that people could get hurt at. Joel said it should be forwarded to the Selectmen and he will provide a copy of this letter to the Downtown Design Committee as well.

6) NEW BUSINESS:

A) Discussion of the information received from MMA regarding new legislature for affordable housing.

Bryan said that right now it is still unclear of what the potential impact of this legislature would be to the town. He could see a concern in regards to subdivisions which this affordable housing legislature would basically remove home rule authority in certain situations. This could possibly be an issue for them especially with the current infrastructure that we have. He said he shared this as something they should be thinking about. Joel said there is a working group at the State level that is looking into possible impacts to towns if this passes. He said they should have the study completed by the end of this summer hopefully. He said this will affect everyone whether your town has zoning or not. Joel said he is keeping a close eye on this and will keep them updated when he hears anything new.

B) Joint Planning Board and Selectmen meeting date discussion

Cynthia said that the dates that the Selectmen were looking at were either September 20th or October 18th. It was decided that the September 20th date would work the best. Cynthia also reminded them to let her know of any items they would like to add to the agenda.

7) UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

None

8) COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE:

Joel said the new draft has all of the suggestions that were made at the last meeting as well as information from the water company about protecting the main water source in town. He asked if anyone had any additional comments or information they would like to be added. There were none. Joel said they can now move onto the next chapter.

9) ITEMS BY:

- **SELECTMEN:**

- **DEPARTMENT HEADS:**

Bryan said that the Eaton Mountain Rd. solar project had a change in ownership. The new owner of that project is REC Solar Commercial Corporation. They are now the permit holder of that project. He said they have started marking the site now.

Bryan said he and Joel will be having a pre-application meeting tomorrow for another solar project to be located on Patricia Reed's property on Norridgewock Avenue.

Bryan said that Stephen Barrett from Barrett Energy Group has reached out to him about the solar array that was approved on the Galbraith property on Norridgewock Avenue.

He said that project is being restructured to make it smaller due to constraints put on them by CMP. Therefore, they will be coming back to the Planning Board again for Site Plan review.

Blasting has started today on the Public Safety Building site.

KVCAP has started hanging drywall at the Mary Street project.

- **MEMBERS:**

Harvey congratulated Paul York and Steve Govoni on getting reelected to the Board of Selectmen.

- **CHAIRMAN:**

- **STAFF:** Joel said that KVCOG has hired a new director, Matt Underwood, so once he settles in then hopefully, he can get back to more of the planning work.

ADJOURNMENT:

Motion by Steve St. Pierre to adjourn at 7:28 p.m., Seconded by Harvey Austin. Motion passed 4-0.

Minutes approved on August 16, 2022

Chairman
