

**MINUTES
CHARLESTOWN PLANNING BOARD
MARCH 6, 2012**

Members Present: Robert Frizzell (Chair); Sharon Francis (Vice-Chair); Steve Neill (Ex-Officio), Pat Royce, Rose Smith-Hull, Roger Thibodeau

Alternates Present: Eric Lutz

Staff Present: David Edkins Planning & Zoning Administrator
Regina Borden – Recording Secretary

CALL TO ORDER & SEATING OF ALTERNATES: Mr. Frizzell called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM. He noted that regular member Andy Jellie and alternate member James Jenkins were absent therefore he called upon Eric Lutz to sit on the Board for Andy Jellie. Meetings are tape recorded so he asked anyone wishing to speak to identify themselves for the record.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF THE FEBRUARY 21, 2012 MEETING:

Mrs. Francis moved to approve the Minutes of the February 21, 2012 meeting as printed. Mr. Thibodeau seconded the motion. With four members in favor, the minutes were approved. Mrs. Smith-Hull and Mr. Lutz abstained as they were not present at this meeting.

Mr. Thibodeau stepped off the Board for the following Agenda item.

JOHN & ELINOR OLSON and ROGER & NANCY THIBODEAU – Boundary Adjustment Between Existing Lots – 125 Birch Drive – Map 233, Lots 52 & 53 – Zone E (Mixed Use): Travis Royce was present representing the applicants. Birch Drive is a private drive that serves three owners; Greenberg, Olson and Thibodeau. Mr. & Mrs. Thibodeau own 8.4 acres. There is a long piece from Breakneck Hill toward the Olson residence of .77 acres that will be transferred from Thibodeau to Olson. It starts before the covered bridge that is on the Olson driveway. It does not affect any Town road frontage. This boundary adjustment leaves Mr. Thibodeau with 7.63 acres and Olson with over 100 acres. Mr. Royce put some flagging on the new property line. No abutters were present.

Mrs. Francis moved to accept this application for a Boundary Adjustment as complete. Mrs. Royce seconded the motion. With six members in favor, the motion was approved.

Mrs. Francis moved to grant final approval for this Boundary Adjustment between Existing Lots for John & Elinor Olson and Roger & Nancy Thibodeau as presented. Mrs. Royce seconded the motion. With six members in favor, the motion was approved.

Mr. Thibodeau resumed his seat on the Board.

Mr. Frizzell stepped off the Board for the following Agenda item as he is an abutter. Vice Chair Mrs. Francis took the Chair.

GRANITE STATE ELECTRIC COMPANY – Unmanned Electrical Substation – 187 Michael Avenue – Map 107, Lots 1 & 4 – Zones A-1-Rural Residential (Lot 4) and E-Mixed Use (Lot 1): Dan Mahoney introduced Jill Fitzpatrick, Jeff Goldberg, Chris Novak and Linda Connell representing National Grid which is proposing to build a substation on Michael Avenue. A substation is a piece of equipment that converts voltage from a higher voltage that is used to transmit power across transmission lines to a lower voltage that can be used out on the public ways and eventually delivered to residential homes and businesses. It consists of a transformer and circuit breakers. They propose to tap a 46 kV line that is owned by Central Vermont Public Service up off Michael Avenue. There are two rights-of-way that run along this parcel of land; one is owned by New England Power Company and the other is owned by Central Vermont. There are no moving parts in the substation, no real noise other than a slight hum from the transformer. To do this they purchased two properties: a 70 acre property from Paris and 187 Michael Avenue to gain access to the larger parcel. There is a shed on the 187 Michael Avenue property that will remain. The foundation hole from the house that burned will all be removed and filled in. The substation will sit approximately 600-feet off Michael Avenue so people driving by will probably not be able to see the structure from the road, there will be a gate across the driveway. Access to the substation from National Grid or Granite State Electric personnel will only be about once or twice a month or as frequent as needed for the operation. They are interested in building a substation here to accommodate the plan by Whelen Engineering Company to expand operations at its manufacturing facility; it will allow them to do some upgrade work at the Charlestown substation and provide better service to everyone in Town.

Mrs. Smith-Hull questioned if there will be an alarm. Mr. Mahoney responded that there will be an alarm at the gate to the substation (not on the gate by the road), that will notify their dispatch center and alarms on the transformer and on the equipment so if something were to happen it will alert the dispatch center. Depending on the type of alarm they will know how to respond. Mrs. Smith-Hull asked if they have automatic chemicals in the event of a fire. Mr. Mahoney explained that if a fire were to start in the substation, that is rare but possible, they would ask that the Fire Department would respond but they do not want them to go in until their own responder is there as they know what is safe and unsafe. The oil in the transformers is mineral oil and is non-hazardous.

Jeff Goldberg, Civil Engineer, advised that they looked at different locations in order to minimize disturbance to the neighbors and wetlands. There will be a tree line around the substation and the road. The proposed roadway minimizes disturbance to the wetlands. The substation will have a fenced in area of 160-feet by 160-feet square. There will be some storm water drainage features in order to slow down the flow from regular storm water going down the hill. The oil inside the transformers does not typically leak but they have a containment pit with an impervious layer underneath it with crushed stone so if there is a leak it will be trapped; they would dig out the leaked oil and replace the trap. The oil cannot migrate. There will be a control house that will be 30' x 14'. There will be lights around the periphery and at the door of the

control house. They will ordinarily be off but they need lighting in the event of needed repairs. The fencing around the substation will be 7-feet high with 1-foot barbed wire on the top. There will be 1-inch mesh to the ground so nobody can crawl in. There will be standard bar gate along the road to prevent vehicles from gaining access to the driveway that will be locked. Mr. Thibodeau asked what the required containment area is. Mr. Goldberg advised that it is 120% if there is a release during a rain event and they take that into account. Mrs. Francis asked if the access road is at grade level. Mr. Goldberg responded that it is sloped; they will build the substation on the slope. The substation would have a pad. The road is almost a straight shot elevation of 630 at the street to about 646 at the substation. In response to a question from Mr. Lutz, Mr. Greenberg said they do come and plow snow quite often for safe access so they put in a guardrail. Mrs. Francis asked about the gate on Michael Avenue; will they design the gate to make it appropriate for this residential neighborhood and differentiate it from a business/commercial area. Mr. Greenberg indicated that on the plan they have a standard steel gate but they can work with the PB on it as long as they can lock it. Mr. Thibodeau asked if there will be fans on the transformers. Mr. Greenberg said there will be fans. Mr. Mahoney said the noise is similar to a fan in the window; there will be 9-to-12 of them. They have done a sound study in that area and the worse case scenario is that it all falls within the Town's guidelines but from past experience the transformer noise sounds like a hum without the fans. The fans will only be on during peak summer days as they cool off the oil that circulates around the transformer.

Mrs. Francis opened the discussion to the public.

Jim Fowler asked if they did a study on wildlife as there are a lot of turkeys in that area. Mr. Mahoney said wildlife will not get through the mesh; they try to keep animals away from the equipment. Mr. Edkins noted that they did provide some documentation as they checked with the Natural Heritage Program and there are no threatened or endangered species in this area.

Mr. Holmes asked if the power coming down will be underground to Michael Avenue. Mr. Mahoney said it will all be underground to where it will rise to the existing poles.

Mr. Edkins advised that all of the abutters were notified by certified mail. There was very little comment from the abutting property owners. Mrs. Smith-Hull spoke to one of the abutters and he didn't even feel he had to come to the meeting.

Ms. Connell advised that in the application there were several requested Waivers to Section 5.6.1 because a) such criteria are inconsistent with the intent of the Regulations with regard to this application; b) satisfying the requirements below would cause practical difficulty to Granite State and represent an unreasonable expense; and c) granting waivers from these requirements would not be detrimental to the Town or to abutters.

...front, rear, and side setbacks; percentage of lot coverage...

The property had been surveyed in full when the company was just thinking they were going to buy the Paris parcel because it does have deeded access to Michael Avenue. There are a lot of wetlands over where that access was laid out in the past and not used; the company looked at that and felt it was not ideal so they acquired the Stone parcel. Since they now have title to both parcels they will be filing a Voluntary Merger form to merge the two lots. They are asking for a

Waiver from the survey as it seems like an unnecessary expense. They are not getting close to the boundaries. They will continue to use the Stone driveway for access to the shed that will be used for storage. Other than this the Stone property will be left as is. Both the Paris and Stone properties are largely wooded areas so there is no need to disturb it other than the driveway. Relative to the landscaping requirements they plan to leave the existing vegetation in place except for the pad and fenced areas. Mr. Edkins noted that there is survey data on all the lots involved.

Mrs. Francis complimented and thanked them for the thoroughness of their application.

Mr. Lutz asked about the timing assuming that the project is approved. Mr. Mahoney said they are still involved with some environmental permitting and a plan that was submitted to the Conservation Commission. They want to remove the foundation, fill in that area to make it safe so will probably start in May or June. Site clearing will follow and the substation would start in late summer. June 2013 is the anticipated completion date.

Mr. Neill asked if there will be a gate at the driveway to the existing building. Mr. Greenberg said they were not going to put a gate there but there is a gate to the substation. If the PB felt they needed a gate they would put one in but they will just be storing operational stuff in there, no oil or contaminants. The building will be locked. They want to keep it in the nature of the neighborhood. Mrs. Royce feels it is important that they gate at the road with something that is pleasing to the eye for the neighborhood. Mr. Neill questioned why they are maintaining the second driveway and not use the main driveway. Mr. Greenberg said there is a steeper slope there; it is pretty steep coming from the westerly side of the existing garage. He said they could gate both driveways. Mr. Frizzell noted that there will be no water or sewer hook-ups. Will there be any other development on the property. Mr. Greenberg said there are no plans to do so.

Mr. Neill suggested having a site visit to look at the access and maybe walk in to see the substation location. The PB members were agreeable. There was a consensus to schedule this site visit for Tuesday, March 20th at 5:30 PM; this will be prior to the next regular meeting.

Mr. Thibodeau pointed out that there have been drainage issues there. Mr. Edkins advised that the applicant did provide a storm water management report but that information did not go out to all members as it was lengthy and supplemental information. Mr. Greenberg noted that they will be replacing the culvert underneath the proposed driveway. All the storm water flow off the hill either goes around the substation or down the driveway and gets caught in the retention structure. No water will be going onto Michael Avenue.

Mrs. Royce moved to accept this application as complete including the requested waivers. Mrs. Smith-Hull seconded the motion. With six members in favor, the motion was approved.

Mr. Edkins advised that he looked at the requested Waivers and did not see anything that he would consider unreasonable. Ms. Connell requested that the PB review them at this meeting in the event there is something the PB would like to see addressed for the next meeting.

...front, rear, and side setbacks; percentage of lot coverage...

Ms. Connell explained that they did not do this because of the layout of the project. The property line set-back to the compound is about 565 feet from the road. The actual percentage of the substation lot covered by the proposed substation is extremely small on this large lot.

...Planning Board acceptance block...

They will put an acceptance block on the final plan. They felt it would be easier to do this after all other substantive revisions have been made.

...property boundaries (of the Stone Property)...

The Stone property is being acquired to provide access to the substation on the Parris property rather than improving the paper road from Michael Avenue that currently gives the Parris property legal access and road frontage. The survey on the Stone property is not new work.

...Elevation views, conceptual plans...

The height of the control house at the substation will stand only fourteen (14) feet tall and will be surrounded by woods. It is functional. The construction will be steel, probably a prefab structure.

...Applicant shall obtain and furnish a letter stating agreement by the public utilities providers to serve the site...

This is not suitable for this application. They will bring in a telephone line for the alarm system but that is the only utility.

...The location and design of exterior lighting and signs...

Ms. Connell noted that they haven't given the PB detail on this as it is very limited. Lights will go on at night when someone is there but will not be on on a regular basis. Lights will be turned on by a switch. Mr. Greenberg noted that there will be a small sign on the road saying that it is National Grid. It is for safety purposes and identification.

...A proposed landscaping plan shall show existing landscaping, plantings to be installed and natural cover to be retained, in accordance with Section 5.7.3...

Their plan is to retain the existing landscaping. They plan to remove existing natural growth for the access road and the substation pad only. Mrs. Francis indicated that they might want some shrubs near the roadway to the shed. They are still not looking for a full landscaping plan.

...Plans for snow removal and storage (Section 5.7.7.L)...

Ms. Connell stated that they feel there is plenty of land on both sides of the roadway without disturbing anything.

Mrs. Royce advised that this is a great application and wanted to commend them.

Mrs. Royce moved to accept the application as complete and to grant the Waivers as requested. Mrs. Smith-Hull seconded the motion. With six members in favor, the motion was approved.

PLANNING & POLICY ISSUES:

Mr. Edkins will check into the following issues:

Sign: Mrs. Royce questioned if the sign on Lower Landing Road for R & R Auto Works was approved.

Wheeler Rand Road: Mrs. Smith-Hull mentioned that there is a car sales lot just south of Indian Shutters.

Borough Road: Mrs. Francis noted that the situation is the same on the Borough Road with the camper.

ADMINISTRATION & CORRESPONDENCE:

Next Meeting – March 20, 2012: It was noted that Mrs. Royce, Mr. Lutz and Mr. Thibodeau will not be present at the next meeting. Mr. Jellie and Mr. Jenkins will be back and will be informed of the site visit by Mr. Edkins.

Mr. Edkins reported that there are three new applications for the next meeting:

- 1) A Boundary Line Adjustment on the Old Springfield Road;
- 2) A Site Plan Review application on Cummings Avenue for a storage building; and
- 3) A Site Plan Review application for a number of new activities at the Flight Park.

ADJOURNMENT:

There being no other business, Mr. Lutz moved to adjourn this meeting. Mrs. Smith-Hull seconded the motion. With seven members in favor, the motion was approved. The time was 8:37 PM.

Respectfully submitted,
Regina Borden, Recording Secretary

Minutes Filed: 3-16-12

(**Note:** These are unapproved Minutes. Corrections, if necessary, will be found in the Minutes of the March 20, 2012, Planning Board meeting.)