

**TOWN OF GREAT BARRINGTON
SPECIAL JOINT MEETING
BOARD OF SELECTMEN, PLANNING BOARD, AGRICULTURAL
COMMISSION and ENERGY COMMITTEE
MINUTES
FEBRUARY 27, 2012
6:00 P.M. – 7:30 P.M. – TOWN HALL**

PRESENT: STEPHEN BANNON
 ANDREW BLECHMAN
 ALANA CHERNILA
 DEB PHILLIPS
 SEAN STANTON
 KEVIN O'DONNELL, TOWN MANAGER

TOWN PLANNER – CHRIS REMBOLD

PLANNING BOARD: JONATHAN HANKIN, RICH DOHONEY, SUZIE FOWLE
SCHROEDER, JACK MUSGROVE, ETHAN CULLETON, BRANDEE NELSON

AGRICULTURAL COMMISSION: HILDA BANKS SHAPIRO, BARBARA
ZHEUTLIN

ENERGY COMMITTEE: NANCY MAURICE ROGERS, CHRIS VLCEK, PETER
GREER

6:00 PM - PUBLIC SESSION - BOARD ROOM

1. CALL TO ORDER

Sean Stanton called the meeting to order at 6:00 P.M.

2. INTRODUCTIONS: All attending introduced themselves

3. DISCUSSIONS RE: RENEWABLE ENERGY/ LAND USE/ AGRICULTURE

Sean Stanton stated that the goal of the meeting is to find out what the groups present have in common and where the town can go from here in regards to this topic. He encouraged all present to move forward with a plan.

Deb Phillips said that there needs to be an energy policy and a route to becoming energy self-sufficient, as a town. She said that agriculture is two-fold. She said first there is the appealing scenery and second is the importance of having productive agriculture on open space and not 'open space that has to be maintained for open space sake.' Deb added that food self-sufficiency is also important. She asked how to keep these from conflicting with one another and suggested creating a mission statement.

Jonathan Hankin asked to what end the town wants to regulate solar energy. He said that agriculture and commercial solar compete for the same spaces and they will have to deal with this fact if we want to move forward.

Deb Phillips asked to what degree can they co-exist and be for the benefit of the community.

Rich Dohoney responded that they both benefit the community.

Goals that were discussed:

Deb Phillips – do not lose farmland

Ethan Culleton – do not discourage renewable energy and sustainability.

Sean Stanton – to encourage local food production which may require a site plan review

Deb Phillips - to make a plan to identify the areas that would be appropriate for commercial solar use.

Rich Dohoney said the Planning Board looked at ways to regulate solar energy, but not eliminate it. He said that the Planning Board never got to a balancing point.

Peter Greer said that both energy and farming needs a subsidy. He said that there needs to be an economic incentive for each. The state has a mandate of 400 megawatts for the entire state by 2020. The state wants to be 20% energy renewable by 2020. He suggested that a goal should be made to be ahead of this as a town; possibly even energy independent by 2020.

Jack Musgrove asked how many acres is needed to be energy self sufficient.

Chris Vlcek replied 3 .5 acres of municipal buildings and 140 acres of residential land.

Chris Vlcek said that it would be helpful if Chris Rembold would analyze how much land the town owns and how much could be available for solar. He would also like to see how many commercial buildings are able to possibly accommodate solar on the roof tops.

Jack Musgrove suggested the use of the transfer station, which is about 23 acres, for solar panels. He also suggested the use of East Mountain.

Peter Greer said that they should not loose sight of other ways to become energy self-sufficient; not just solar power.

Ethan Culleton said that Great Barrington should be a model town in this arena and the town has great potential.

Alana Chernila said that Great Barrington is behind other Massachusetts towns in this area. She said that big decisions have to be made. Incentives will have to be provided, even if it is in a 20 year time frame.

Peter Greer agreed that subsidies should be given to anyone using solar of any size.

Chris Vlcek said that there are potential residential sites that may be available for small solar installations. He asked if there is a way to promote a percentage of the use of agricultural land for solar.

Brandee Nelson said that they may need to look at impediments to remove rather than adding regulations.

Barbara Zheutlin said that there is a 'Keep the Berkshires Farming' initiative which is county wide and will have their first meeting on Friday at the First Congregational Church.

Alana Chernila said that solar energy does not create food. She suggested keeping track of how much food is being created as a community.

Barbara Zheutlin said that there needs to be farms with solar and animals. She said that other areas have accomplished this and suggested that they see what this looks like visually and display it to the town to show the mission.

Jonathan Hankin encouraged all to think about this as agriculture and solar; not separately.

4. ANY ADDITIONAL FOLLOW-UP ITEMS

The next steps are:

The Planning Board to have discussions based on policy to be able to create a document.

The Selectmen will give the Agricultural Commission and Energy Committee more access to information to then bring the information back for a policy discussion.

The Selectmen to look at other communities and see the incentive side and what can be done incentive-wise locally to promote energy and agriculture.

The Planning Board will be given access to professional help in writing the site plan review.

As a community, to reach out to farm and land owners to encourage better use of the land.

The Selectboard will think about specific goals and projects.

Jack Musgrove suggested joint meetings quarterly.

Kevin O'Donnell said that a joint meeting will be scheduled when necessary. He will communicate with all in the meanwhile.

5. ADJOURNMENT:

On a motion by Steve Bannon, seconded by Deb Phillips, the Board of Selectmen adjourned the joint meeting 7:25 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Cara Becker".

Cara Becker
Recording Secretary