



TOWN OF NORTHBOROUGH PLANNING BOARD

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Approved 9.13.17

Planning Board Meeting Minutes June 6, 2017

Members in attendance: Theresa Capobianco, Chair; George Pember; Leslie Harrison; Amy Poretsky

Members excused: Michelle Gillespie

Others in attendance: Kathy Joubert, Town Planner; Fred Litchfield, Town Engineer; Elaine Rowe, Board Secretary; Mike Lotti; Chris Swiniarski; Tom Blasko

Chair Theresa Capobianco called the meeting to order at 7:03PM.

Discussion re: Recreational Marijuana – Ms. Poretsky noted that she has attended three meetings to date about recreational marijuana and voiced her understanding that 40 towns have now opted out, including Southborough and Westborough. She asked board members if they would consider writing a letter to the Board of Selectmen expressing a desire to do so or at least set limits. She explained that opting out of recreational marijuana does not affect legalization of medical marijuana

Ms. Poretsky commented that many towns are choosing to opt out just to be safe, with the understanding that they can always opt in at a later date. She also noted that supporters claim that recreational marijuana will bring in revenue, but the town only gets 2%. She indicated that the Police Chief in Westborough had stated that the cost to his department would far outweigh any revenue generated. She also stated that, should the town opt to allow recreational marijuana sales, it will also include edibles, and she encouraged board members to read up on the matter. She reiterated that 40 towns have opted out so far, with Shrewsbury and Grafton imposing moratoriums. She emphasized her opinion that it would be best for Northborough to opt out.

Ms. Poretsky voiced her opinion that, since the town voted against recreational marijuana in the general election, residents believe that we would already be considered to have opted out. She also suggested that the group in Westborough, who has been researching the matter for over 5 years, may be willing to come in and speak with the Board of Selectmen about what they have learned. Ms. Joubert discussed the composition of the group in Westborough, and recalled that it included members from the School Committee, a local church, and several civic groups. Ms. Poretsky noted that a member of the Westborough Planning Board had taken the lead.

Ms. Poretsky noted that opting out will not limit individuals and use will still be legal; it would simply put a hold on all shops that can cultivate or distribute. Ms. Joubert explained that opting out will require a vote at both Town Meeting and a ballot question at the town election.

Chair Capobianco asked Ms. Poretsky if she would like to take the initiative to invite the Westborough group to speak with the Board of Selectmen. Ms. Poretsky reiterated her desire for the board to send a letter of support for opting out. Ms. Harrison and Mr. Pember had mixed feelings about doing so. Ms. Poretsky suggested that the town residents be given the opportunity to decide. Ms. Joubert stated that the letter does not have to come from the Planning Board, but can come from an individual or a citizen's group.

Site Plan Approval – 55 Bearfoot Road – installation of solar carports over four existing rows of parking

Applicant: Massachusetts Electric Company

Engineer: Industria Engineering, Inc.

Date Filed: May 11, 2017

Decision Due: June 25, 2017

Industrial Engineer Mike Lotti appeared on behalf of Industria Engineering to discuss the proposal. He noted that the parcel is located on the north side of town in an Industrial zone, and the project is affiliated with the Green Communities Act.

Mr. Lotti explained that National Grid is allowed to own up to 25MW of solar power, and is trying to finish the additional 10KW as part of their program before it expires at the end of the year. He noted that the proposal will not affect anyone nearby, and Northborough does not currently house a lot of solar power equipment. Mr. Lotti also indicated that National Grid is doing some testing on battery storage to determine if they can push the curve to discharge power when it is most needed.

Mr. Lotti explained that there is an existing office building and associated parking lot on the property. He noted that the project area is along 4 rows of parking in the existing lot, and the proposal does not involve a loss of any parking spaces or removal of any trees. He also stated that the islands will not be impacted with the exception of one location where a pad will be installed for a transformer. He indicated that one tree will be moved and, should it fail during the transplantation, it will be replaced with something like in kind.

Mr. Lotti discussed the installation of the solar array that will involve each section being supported by a single column with a galvanized steel cable on top with linked panels. He indicated that plans call for trenching across the parking lot and over the islands to the transformer, and the solar array will not be directly attached to the building. He commented that, should there ever be an emergency, the system will immediately shut down and will not turn back on until it has been deemed safe to do so. He also indicated that mobile battery storage will be in a dual-wheel trailer that will house a 250KW battery with 500KW hours of storage. He explained that the trailer has not yet been purchased and will likely be housed at the Sutton facility, with the ability for it to be brought onsite when needed.

Mr. Lotti provided depictions of the construction process and noted that construction will be phased to minimize impacts to the employees. He confirmed that silt sacks will be installed in each of the catch

basins onsite, and noted that geotech testing has already been done and results will be submitted to the Building Inspector. He expressed an expectation that construction will last 3 to 5 months and most of the work will be done on weekdays with the possibility of some weekends as needed if the town allows.

In response to a comment by Ms. Poretsky, Mr. Lotti noted that 12 x 16-inch I-beams will be placed flush and between parking spaces, and reiterated that there will be no loss of parking. Ms. Poretsky asked about gutters on the panels, accumulation of icicles, and the potential for icing on the parking lot. Mr. Lotti explained that there are no gutters proposed as he did not want to change the stormwater conditions onsite. He noted that there will be snow guards on the edges of the panels to prevent snow from slumping off, and stated that the project will require less plowing and more sanding to stay ahead of icing conditions.

Mr. Pember asked about dangers to snow plows created by the columns. Mr. Lotti indicated that the snowplow drivers will need to be aware and alert. Mr. Pember voiced support for the proposal.

In response to a question from Ms. Harrison, Mr. Lotti indicated that 1908 panels are to be installed and will produce more power than the building needs. He also stated that the power generated will not be used to power the building but will be going into the grid. Ms. Harrison asked about the potential for future expansion. Mr. Lotti commented that there is no intention to do so.

Chair Capobianco asked if there is to be any lighting under the panels. Mr. Lotti explained that the existing parking lot lamps will be removed and LED lights will be installed underneath the canopies. Chair Capobianco asked if there will be less light thrown off to adjacent properties. Mr. Lotti indicated that he has not analyzed this, but the new system will be set up so that none, some, or all lamps can be illuminated.

Mr. Litchfield discussed details of his comment letter (copy attached) as follows:

- An Earthwork Permit is required
- Recommendation that a trench permit and roadway permit be obtained
- As-built plan to be submitted upon completion of the project

Chair Capobianco noted the project has been before the Design Review Committee (DRC). Mr. Lotti confirmed that they have been, and noted that there was a great deal of discussion about the issue of snow that Ms. Poretsky also raised. He also indicated that an agreement was reached about routine maintenance of the galvanized steel structures. Ms. Joubert agreed to condition the decision to ensure quarterly inspections and appropriate maintenance of these structures.

Ms. Joubert explained that she had spoken to the DPW Director whose primary concerns were about the snow guards, which have since been added to the plan. She also noted that the Fire Chief has provided a review letter in which he states that he has no issues with the proposal.

Tom Blasko, 18 Pond View Way, asked why the installation is being done on every other parking row. Mr. Lotti explained that the plan took into consideration the existing islands. In response to a question

from Mr. Blasko about concerns with water, Mr. Litchfield indicated that he has no concerns. He also commented that the project as shown does not indicate the use of an excessive amount of chemicals beyond what is already being used on Bearfoot Road. Mr. Blasko asked about reflection off of the solar panels. Mr. Lotti noted that reflection and glare will be minimal. Mr. Blasko asked about expansion of the solar array into the adjacent field. Mr. Lotti reiterated that there are no plans to do so.

Mr. Blasko asked about the removal of the light poles and use of LED lights, which could potentially light up the entire neighborhood. Mr. Lotti confirmed that poles will be removed, and the LED lights are to be underneath the canopies with controls to provide the ability for them to be turned off.

George Pember made a motion to approve the project and grant Site Plan approval subject to the conditions requested by the DRC and Town Engineer. Leslie Harrison seconded; motion carries by unanimous vote.

386 West Main Street – Ms. Joubert explained that this is not a public hearing. Chris Swiniarski appeared before the board to seek a determination and approval of a minor amendment to a previously approved plan for the project at 386 West Main Street. He noted that the applicant is now seeking to reduce the size of the 50' x 50' compound that was previously approved to 22' x 40'. He explained that, in the time since the initial design, some of the technology has changed and equipment shelters are no longer being used. He explained that the previous plan included a large compound to accommodate at 26' x 12' equipment shelter that is no longer needed, and noted that the pole itself remains unchanged.

Ms. Joubert explained that town staff did not feel that this was a substantial enough change to require the applicant to come back before the board, but given the interest and concerns about these towers Mr. Swiniarski expressed a desire to do so.

Ms. Poretsky noted that the original plan included space for co-location and asked if the new plan still includes this. Mr. Swiniarski confirmed that it does. Ms. Poretsky stated that she wants to ensure that the applicant is providing for 3 other carriers to co-locate on the pole since our bylaw requires it. She also asked if there are any changes to the parking lot proposed. Mr. Swiniarski stated that there are not. Ms. Poretsky noted that there were a couple of things that were originally proposed to be enclosed within the fenced area that now do not appear to be. She also noted that the bushes were reduced from 12 to 2. Mr. Swiniarski agreed to add more bushes if it is the board's desire. He explained that the transformer cannot be located inside the locked compound, and where it is located is up to the power company to dictate but it must have vehicular access to it. Noting concerns about the transformer's proximity to hiking trails and children using the trails, Ms. Poretsky asked if it is possible to move it. Mr. Swiniarski noted that transformers are safe, and are often located close to sidewalks. In response to a request by Ms. Poretsky, Mr. Swiniarski agreed to move the bushes to in-between the tree line and transformer if he is able to do so. He also stated that fewer trees will need to be removed since the size of the compound has been reduced. Board members discussed the preferred location and types of bushes to be planted, with hopes that they will mask all of the equipment that will be installed. Ms. Joubert clarified that the board would like 5 arborvitae installed on the northeast side in between the bollards.

In response to a question from Ms. Joubert about timing of the work, Mr. Swiniarski indicated that the foundation work is expected to be done in mid-July. Ms. Joubert asked Mr. Swiniarski to advise her once firm dates have been determined so that the town can notify trail users. Mr. Swiniarski agreed to do so.

Members of the board agreed that decreasing the size of compound area and installing arborvitae is not a substantial change.

Other Business

Ms. Joubert explained the following to the board:

- Meeting Minutes are not available due to issues with the cable network and the availability of the recordings of meetings, and will be provided once those issues are resolved.
- Ms. Joubert proposed that the board meet on July 18 and Aug. 15. Members of the board agreed.
- No applications have been filed for the second June meeting. Member of the board agreed that there is no need to meet on June 20th.
- Ms. Joubert noted that the ZBA agenda for June 27th includes a request for variances to allow construction of duplexes in the Industrial zone on the property located at 5 Bearfoot Road and a variance for a sign at 293 West Main Street.

Master Plan – In response to a question about the Master Plan, Ms. Joubert explained that the RFP will go out this summer and meetings should begin in September. Ms. Poretsky asked when the town will advertise for volunteers for the Master Planning Committee. Ms. Joubert noted that no specific date has been discussed, but such advertising will be posted on the town website.

Green Communities – Ms. Joubert noted that the filing dealing to proceed with the green communities initiative is approaching, and noted that the town is in the process of fulfilling other criteria including compiling data about electricity usage from all town buildings, town fleet vehicles, and an energy audit on all town buildings. She noted that there is a good amount of work to be done for the project.

SA Farm - Ms. Poretsky noted that there is a lot of talk around town about this situation and questioned whether there is anything that can be added to the bylaw to prevent this from happening again in the future. Ms. Joubert voiced her understanding that the operations being done on both sides of the roadway have been determined to be an agricultural use and are therefore exempt from zoning. Ms. Poretsky asked who classified the use as agriculture and asked if it is possible to prohibit commercial composting. Ms. Joubert suggested that the board refrain from further discussion until she speaks with the Town Administrator.

Meeting adjourned at 8:22PM.

Respectfully submitted,
Elaine Rowe
Board Secretary