

**STURBRIDGE PLANNING BOARD
MINUTES OF
THURSDAY, JANUARY 3, 2013**

Ms. Gibson-Quigley called the regular meeting of the Planning Board to order at 6:30 PM. On a roll call by Ms. Dumas the following members were present:

Present: Charlie Blanchard
Russell Chamberland
James Cunniff
Penny Dumas
Heather Hart
Susan Waters
Sandra Gibson-Quigley, Chair

Also Present: Jean M. Bubon, Town Planner
Diane Trapasso, Administrative Assistant

Ms. Gibson-Quigley opened the meeting and read the agenda.

PUBLIC HEARING – BOARD OF SELECTMEN PETITION ON A PROPOSED ZONING BYLAW AMENDMENT FOR A TEMPORARY MORATORIUM ON THE CONSTRUCTION OF LARGE SCALE WIND SYSTEMS AND LARGE SCALE PHOTOVOLTAIC INSTALLATIONS WITH THE EXCEPTION OF MUNICIPAL LARGE SCALE PHOTOVOLTAIC INSTALLATIONS

CONTINUATION – PUBLIC HEARING – CITIZENS’ PETITION ON A PROPOSED ZONING AMENDMENT SOLAR BYLAW AND PROPOSED ZONING AMENDMENT GROUND MOUNTED SOLAR PHOTOVOLTAIC INSTALLATIONS

Both hearings were discussed simultaneously.

Materials presented:

Board of Selectmen Petition for a proposed Temporary Moratorium on Non-Municipal Wind & Solar Facilities that was forwarded to the Planning Board for Public Hearing by vote of the Board of Selectmen on December 17, 2012

Ms. Dumas read the legal notice.

Mr. Creamer, Chair of the BOS, stated that the purpose of this moratorium is that no building permit may be issued for the construction of any large scale wind energy system or large scale ground mounted photovoltaic installation.

Recently, there has been interest for the construction of a large scale photovoltaic energy system which could potentially affect the Town as a whole. Though none are proposed, the Town as a whole would potentially be similarly impacted by large scale wind energy projects. With the exception of the immediate corridors along state highways, the Town of Sturbridge is predominantly a rural and undeveloped community. Currently, there are no large scale wind, or ground mounted solar photovoltaic energy systems in Town although a municipal solar photovoltaic installation is being purposely planned for industrial-zoned, publicly-owned property along a state highway corridor.

Mr. Creamer stated that there is an immediate identified community need to establish long term zoning regulations to ensure that such uses and development will be consistent with the Town's long term planning interest. It is crucial that the Town act now to establish a temporary moratorium on the use of land and the construction of structures related to such large scale wind and solar photovoltaic energy systems and the issuance of building permits in connection with same.

Mr. Creamer also stated that three years ago he, the BOS and the Planning Board were in favor of such a project that was presented to them informally. But since then the Town and Town Counsel have determined these solar farms are not allowed in residential areas.

Mr. Creamer stated that the moratorium will be in effect until February 1, 2014. This will give the Planning Board time to develop appropriate bylaw proposals for Wind and Solar facilities within the Town.

Ms. Gibson-Quigley stated that this is a BOS petition and not a Planning Board proposal.

Members of the Finance Committee were also present at the meeting.

The Board had the following concerns and questions:

- What is the definition of large scale - Mr. Creamer stated that they are waiting for a call back from Town Counsel on a definition
- What about homeowners – Mr. Creamer stated that homeowners are encourage to have solar panels for their own use and may sell back to the grid
 - How many kilowatts does an average home use – about 100KW
 - If solar farms are a danger to the community, why is it okay for the Town to be exempt – Mr. Creamer stated that the project is on State industrial land
 - Why have both a moratorium and Citizens Petition – Mr. Creamer stated that the moratorium will give the Planning Board time to work on a bylaw and tweak the Citizens petition, plus if the moratorium fails' at least we have a bylaw
 - The Finance Committee made some grammar corrections on the Citizens Petition. They also asked for clarification of definitions, and of various parts of the proposed moratorium.

Mr. Chapman, Manager of Sunfield Solar, and Carisbrooke Holdings proposed Solar Project on Fiske Hill Road, stated that they met with the Town Planner, Conservation Agent and the Town Assessor and were told they had no issue with their proceeding with a solar farm project. He also claimed that they were told that numerous other solar projects have been

allowed to proceed in residential zones. Now, they are being told that solar farm are not permitted. Should the project not be allowed to proceed they will be seeking recovery of all expenses incurred.

Motion: Made by Mr. Cunniff to close the Public Hearing for the Citizen's Petition – Proposed Zoning Amendment Proposed Solar Bylaw.

2nd: Ms. Waters

Discussion: None

Vote: 7 - 0

Motion: Made by Mr. Chamberland to close the Public Hearing on the BOS – Proposed Zoning Amendment Temporary Moratorium – Non Municipal Wind and Solar Facilities.

2nd: Mr. Blanchard

Discussion: None

Vote: 7 – 0

Motion: Made by Mr. Blanchard to support the amended Proposed Zoning Amendment Temporary Moratorium, adding the definition of large scale wind and solar facilities

2nd: Mr. Chamberland

Discussion: Ms. Gibson-Quigley stated that she supports the moratorium but not the citizen's petition – no need to have both – the moratorium gives the Board time to work on a bylaw

Ms. Waters supports both as the Planning Board can then work with the citizens on a better bylaw

Ms. Dumas stated that both are important and make amendments to the bylaw

Ms. Bubon stated that the citizens' bylaw needs work – some thoughts are an overlay district – site controls - setbacks – visual impact – there is a lot to think about

Vote: 7 – 0

Motion: Made by Ms. Dumas to support the Citizen's Petition – Proposed Zoning Amendment Solar Bylaw

2nd: Ms. Hart

Discussion: Needs work

Vote: 3 – 4 (Mr. Blanchard, Mr. Chamberland, Mr. Cunniff & Ms. Gibson-Quigley)

Motion: Made by Mr. Cunniff not to support the Citizen's Petition – Proposed Zoning Amendment Solar Bylaw

2nd: Mr. Blanchard

Discussion: None

Vote: 4 – 3 (Ms. Dumas, Ms. Hart & Ms. Waters)

TOWN PLANNER UPDATE

None

OLD BUSINESS/NEW BUSINESS

None

NEXT MEETING

Next meeting date is January 8, 2013 at Center Office Building

On a motion made by Mr. Chamberland and seconded by Mr. Blanchard, and voted 7 – 0, the meeting adjourned at 9:25 PM.