

**STURBRIDGE PLANNING BOARD
MINUTES OF
TUESDAY, OCTOBER 22, 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: Russell Chamberland
James Cunniff
Penny Dumas, Clerk
Heather Hart
Sandra Gibson-Quigley, Chair
Susan Waters

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

Absent: Charles Blanchard

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

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Motion: Made by Ms. Dumas to accept the amended minutes of October 8, 2013.
2nd: Ms. Waters
Discussion: None
Vote: 5 – 0 – 1 (Ms. Gibson-Quigley)

MICHAEL HENNESSEY OF PROVIDENCE REALTY INVESTMENT - TO DISCUSS SOLAR AS AN ACCESSORY USE TO AN EXISTING HOUSING DEVELOPMENT AND THE POTENTIAL OF AMENDING THE ZONING BYLAW TO ACCOMMODATE SUCH.

Materials presented:

PRI Renewable Energy – Heritage Green Solar Farm – Sturbridge MA

Mr. Hennessey, COO of PRI Renewable Energy and Mr. Beaumont of Beaumont Solar Company were present.

Mr. Hennessey stated that he is before the Board solely to discuss solar as an accessory use to an existing housing development. This is not a proposal; the main purpose of this discussion is to discuss the concept of accessory use and to see if the Board would consider this.

Mr. Hennessey stated that Heritage Green is an existing three-story elderly and family apartment community with 130 units on a 24 acre site. \$1.64 million of renovations were completed in 2012 to improve energy efficiency. There is a high occupancy rate of 95.3%.

Mr. Hennessey gave an overview and benefits of the project:

- 650kw ground mounted solar farm to be built at Heritage Green
- Operated and maintained by third party, Beaumont Solar
- Electrical energy independence
- Land lease revenue from Solar Company to help offset current electrical costs
- Opportunity for community outreach program with local schools
- Future costs would only increase 2 -3% per year, guaranteeing fixed pricing for 15 years
- Supports Governor Patrick's Renewable Portfolio Standard Solar Carve-Out Program goals
- PRI wants to make this a Renewable Energy model for Affordable Housing
- Ultimately conserves energy and reduces our carbon emissions footprint

Ms. Gibson-Quigley stated that we have a solar bylaw that was voted by the Town residents on January 7, 2013. The main purpose of this discussion is to discuss the concept of accessory use. The Board can then decide if this is something that it believes would be a potential change that should be considered for inclusion in the bylaw.

Ms. Bubon stated that back in April Mr. Hennessey approached her about this project and she told him that a solar farm was not allowed in a Residential District. Ms. Bubon stated that she then asked Mr. Hennessey to come to a Planning Board meeting to discuss solar as an accessory use and see if the Board would contemplate solar as an accessory use.

The Board had the following questions and concerns:

- Can the panels be roof mounted – Mr. Beaumont stated that there is not enough power from the roof – need 2 -3 acres less than 20% for solar panels
- What are the incentives for multi-tenant – Mr. Beaumont stated that they are the same – not getting grants – solar renewable credits - just off setting the cost of electricity
- Do tenants pay their own electric bill – Mr. Hennessey stated that he will have to check that – it may be part of their rent
- How will this impact the residents – Mr. Hennessey stated that it would cut back on their rent
- Do the residents know about this project – Mr. Hennessey stated that he did not want to say anything yet until he knew where the Board was on accessory use
- What happens if you sell the units – Mr. Hennessey stated that the units are affordable housing for 30 years
- If you do allow accessory use to the solar bylaw – what would happen if the multi-tenant facility expands

Mr. Zeh of 42 Old Farm Road asked why roof mounted is not feasible. Mr. Beaumont stated roof mounted is not very feasible because of shape and slope of the roofs.

Mr. Zeh asked if they knew Mr. Chapman, who worked for HUD in DC. Mr. Hennessey stated he did not know Mr. Chapman. Mr. Zeh wants the bylaw to remain the way it is.

Mr. Stansky of 24 Old Farm Road wanted to know the tax credits - how many panels can go on the roof – would like to see the electric bill and how much would be saved.

Mr. Muenier of 73 Shepard Road stated that the solar bylaw that is in place now would be weakened by accessory use. Should leave the bylaw alone.

Ms. Pratt of 15 Apple Hill Road wants the bylaw to remain as it is.

Ms. Gimas of 38 Farquhar Road stated that reduced rates are good – but feels this project might be the first of others to come. Ms. Gimas stated that the Town has a solar bylaw that was voted by the residents and it should stand the way it is.

Ms. Goodwin of 19 Orchard Road stated that maybe the multi-tenant bylaw should be changed. Solar farms are not good because it takes away the green areas that we want protected.

Ms. Gorman of 10 Orchard Road felt that solar farm would create a profit for the business and should not to be put in the residential district.

Ms. Gibson-Quigley asked the Board if they wished to consider amending the solar bylaw to have accessory use

Mr. Chamberland felt that at Town meeting when the bylaw was voted on it was discussed that maybe it would need to be tweaked at some point. Maybe now is the time to tweak the bylaw.

The following Board members are not in favor of changing the bylaw:

- Ms. Dumas
- Ms. Hart
- Mr. Cunniff
- Ms. Waters
- Ms. Gibson-Quigley

Motion: Made by Ms. Waters not to consider pursuit of amending the solar bylaw to allow solar arrays as an accessory use to an existing housing development.

2nd: Mr. Cunniff

Discussion: None

Vote: 5 – 1 (Mr. Chamberland)

WIND ENERGY BYLAW DISCUSSION

Materials presented:

Email from Attorney Eichman of Kopelman & Paige – Wind Energy Prohibition – dated 10/15/201

Ms. Bubon stated that Town Counsel has suggested language for a prohibition on wind energy for review and discussion. Ms. Bubon stated that Kopelman & Paige had not exempted the street light generators since Attorney Eichman was not sure how to describe them.

The Board decided to prohibit all.

Motion: Made by Mr. Chamberland to be the petitioner and forward the Wind Energy Bylaw to the BOS to begin the process.

2nd: Ms. Waters

Discussion: None

Vote: 6 – 0

TOWN PLANNER UPDATE

Cumberland Farms – Ms. Bubon stated that submitted revisions to the stormwater system as required by MassDOT. Mr. Morse is reviewing the proposed changes which were necessitated since MassDOT Standard Operating Procedures prohibits any discharge onto its system unless no other alternative exists. Based upon this directive, the proposed subsurface infiltration basin is proposed to be expanded to accommodate the entire impervious surface. A modification will be required with the Conservation Commission Order of Conditions. However, if Mr. Morse is satisfied with the proposed change, this can be a minor modification for the Board and ZBA with revised plans submitted for the file once approved by the Conservation Commission since the modification does not impact any visible site conditions.

Motion: Made by Mr. Chamberland to accept the minor modification for the Planning Board since it does not affect the Site Plan for Cumberland Farms.

2nd: Mr. Cunniff

Discussion: None

Vote: 6 – 0

Bylaw Approval – Ms. Bubon stated that the office received the Attorney General's approval of the bylaws approved at the Annual Town Meeting.

November 12th – Site Plan – Meacham Heating, Cooling & Energy Solutions – new building - 51 Technology Park; – Waiver of Site Plan – Pilot Travel Center – storage unit; – Site Plan - BlueWave, LLC Solar Energy Facility – solar project (Town & MassDOT)

Fall 2013 Workshops CPTC

OLD/NEW BUSINESS

None

NEXT MEETING

November 12, 2013

On a motion made by Mr. Cunniff, seconded by Ms. Dumas voted 6 – 0, the meeting adjourned at 8:25 PM.