

Sutton Planning Board  
Minutes  
May 22, 2017

Approved \_\_\_\_\_

Present: S. Paul, R. Largess, W. Whittier, J. Anderson, M. Sanderson, W. Baker  
Staff: Jen Hager, Planning Director

General Business

Minutes:

Motion: To approve the minutes of 5/8/17, R. Largess

2<sup>nd</sup>: W. Whittier

Vote: 4-0-1, S Paul abstains as he was not present

Minutes of 5/18 tabled until next meeting.

Filings: None

Form A Plans: None

Covenant Revision – Journey’s Rest

J. Hager noted owner Clara Kim was to appear on June 5<sup>th</sup>, but Mrs. Hager will explain her request to the Board because if the Board feels they can act on this request tonight they may be able to skip their June 5<sup>th</sup> meeting as this is the only item currently scheduled.

She explained the covenant for this three lot subdivision off Lackey Road currently says that the owner cannot pull a building permit on homes in the project until the infrastructure is completed. The Board never requires completion of the infrastructure prior to home construction as you don’t really want concrete trucks driving on top course pavement, however usually a different form of surety is provided at that point instead of a covenant. Ms. Kim wants to retain the covenant only but restrict occupancy until the infrastructure is completed.

The roadway is currently firmly packed subbase likely adequate to get safety vehicles into the site if they are needed during home construction. She did not know if underground utilities had been installed.

The Board discussed safety and precedent. W. Whittier felt at least the base course should be down before a building permit is granted.

Motion: To amend section 5b of the covenant to allow the owner to begin home construction once roadway base course is down and safety department say it is adequate for safety vehicle access, R. Largess

2<sup>nd</sup>: W. Whittier

Vote: 5-0-0

Correspondence/Other:

140 W/P Turnpike – J. Hager noted the fencing at Sutton Station that screens parking from abutters has finally been installed.

**Public Hearing – Site Plan Review – National Grid Solar Parking/Storage Canopies – 1152 Main Street, Northbridge**

R. Largess read the hearing notice as it appeared in The Chronicle.

Mike Lotti of Industria Engineering was present to review the site plan for a 3 MW solar installation adjacent to the National Grid North East Distribution Center located at 1152 Main Street in Northbridge. Although access and offices are in Northbridge, the existing equipment storage yard and maintenance building are actually located in Sutton. This project proposes to install 10- 900 panel solar canopies over the existing equipment storage and parking at this location. Each canopy will be supported by 14 piers that will be drilled 12-14' deep. Other than this drilling there will be no changes to the ground at all. The panels are installed at a height that allows typical maintenance and delivery vehicle to pass and park underneath. The low end of panels is 20' and the high end is 25' with an upper side height of 23' to 25' high. There is a 1" gap between panels allowing rain and moisture to seep to the surface much as it does now so no drainage issues will be created. The panels are mounted with a 3° southerly tilt. Wind is the major safety concern resulting in careful installation with just enough tilt to capture the sun without creating room for lift under the panels. Existing 12' high light poles will be removed and 12 LED lights will be mounted on the underside of each canopy. Transformers, inverters and battery storage will be located on paved area in Northbridge. This facility is a locked facility with 24 hour security.

J. Hager stated visibility of the system from Route 146 north as well as the Walmart parking area is the most significant concern. Mr. Lotti presented a cross section that shows the canopies will be just a little higher than the elevation of the highway but will be located nearly 200' east with some vegetation and two security fences in between. He also noted there is a small hill between the Walmart parking area and the storage yard so he doubts the canopies will be visible. It was noted conditions could include the Board reserving the right to review screening post installation and requiring additional plantings if necessary. Mr. Lotti did not have an issue with reviewing this post installation and noted they typically plant evergreen plantings to help shield installations.

Mr. Lotti added the site will require no additional Town services. The installation will not bringing more employees although 30-40 additional workers will be in the area during construction which is expected to take 6-12 months. He said there is a humming noise from the inverters but at 50-100' away it cannot be heard.

S. Paul asked if there will be aglow from the LED lights? Mr. Lotti stated there will likely be a glow but no shining outward as the lights are designed to shine directly down.

W. Whittier asked if there will be a glare off the panels toward the highway. Mr. Lotti stated there would be very little if any and added the panels are coated with anti-reflective coating because reflected light is lost power.

The MIT intern who prepared the view shed cross section calculated that a typical river traveling north on Route 146 will see only a 5' wide cross section of the project.

R. Nunnemacher of 24 Singletary Avenue asked if all panels will be in Sutton. Mr. Lotti stated there are two canopies that are actually split by the own line. He said because of newer technology they may be able to eliminate these two canopies and still achieve the same output, but he could not guarantee this at this time. He stated they would be happy to work with the Assessors to determine an accurate count of panels in each town for taxation purposes. It was noted this project may seek a Pilot agreement although Mr. Nunnemacher noted the solar on the existing building is taxed as straight personal property currently. He also stated because of many reasons the Assessors would like to be included in future Pilot agreement negotiations for this type of project. The Board said they would relay this desire to the Administrator.

Dan Healy of 572 Mendon Road asked how this installation will affect his property in terms of construction noise, glow, and fire potential. Mr. Lotti clarified that this installation is not over the northern storage area near the maintenance facility it is over the southern storage area adjacent to the office building, so it is well over 1,000' from Mr. Healy's property. He added there is very little in the panels that can burn, they tend to melt, not combust.

R. Nunnemacher asked what is the maximum size of this type of installation that can be allowed? Mr. Lotti stated once an installation gets over 5 MW it is considered a power plant as goes through an entirely different type of permitting. J. Hager stated under zoning there is no limit on the size of these installations. Mr. Lotti added each potential installation is studied in terms of its impact on the power grid to ensure no issues are created. On a question from S. Paul Mr. Lotti confirmed if there is too much power being generated for the grid to transmit, these systems can be turned off.

The applicant has not submitted a detailed list of waivers. A blanket waiver can be granted considering this is a previously developed site so many of the site plan requirements are not appropriate for this filing. The Board felt a detailed list should be presented by the applicant. The Board also discussed the filing fee. The Bylaw requires a fee of over \$10,545 based on construction value. J. Hager explained the fee is supposed to be proportionate to the actual cost of staff time for administration and review and any significant overages are to be returned to the applicant. Because this is a previously developed site little review is necessary and she anticipates no more than \$2,000 dollars' worth of actual expenses. The Board waived the fee down to \$2,500 noting the value of a good working relationship with a local utility company.

Motion: To continue the hearing to 6/5 at 7:05 PM, W. Whittier  
 2<sup>nd</sup>: R. Largess  
 Vote: 5-0-0

Motion: To adjourn, R. Largess  
 2<sup>nd</sup>: W. Whittier  
 Vote: 4-0-0

8:15 PM