

**TOWN OF SKOWHEGAN
PLANNING BOARD
MEETING MINUTES**

May 18, 2021

6:00 P.M.

Conference Room, Skowhegan Community Center

PRESENT:

Steve Conley, Chairman
Steve St. Pierre, Vice Chairman
Stephen Gould, Secretary
Harvey Austin
Matt Smith
Joel Greenwood, Planner
Cynthia Kirk, Recording Secretary

ABSENT: Brady Chapman

PUBLIC PRESENT:

Bryan Belliveau, Code Enforcement Officer
Dan Luce
Robert Poulin
Willie Boynton, Boynton & Pickett
Travis Bickford

Justin Vanderbroeck, Renergetica
Nate Niles, Revision Energy

Steve Conley, Chairman opened the public hearing, at 6:01 PM, to hear any comments on the following projects:

- A) Subdivision application submitted by Bessey Development Company for a proposed 11-lot subdivision to be located on the Palmer Road, Assessor's Map 13, Lot 38.
Willie Boynton from Boynton & Pickett gave a brief description of the project. No comments from the public received.

- B) Site Plan Application submitted by Renergetica for the proposed solar array to be located at 369 & 371 West Front Street. (Assessor's Map 8, Lots 2 & 2-3).
Justin Vanderbroeck from Renergetica gave a brief description of the proposed solar project. No comments from the public received.

Steve Conley closed the public hearing at 6:06 pm.

• **QUORUM:**

Planning Board Meeting called to order at 6:06 P.M. Quorum was present.

2) **MINUTES OF THE May 4, 2021 PLANNING BOARD MEETING TO BE APPROVED:**

Motion by Stephen Gould to approve the May 4, 2021 Planning Board meeting minutes.
Seconded by Steve St. Pierre. Motion passed 3-0. (Harvey abstained)

3) SITE PLAN / SUBDIVISION

A. Discussion and decision on the subdivision application submitted by Bessey Development Company for a proposed 11-lot subdivision to be located on the Palmer Road. Assessor's map 13, Lot 38)

Steve Conley asked if anybody had any questions. Joel thanked Mr. Boynton for making the changes that were recommended by the Staff Review Committee. Stephen Gould said he is concerned that there isn't a road profile in the packet if they are planning on having the new road adopted by the town in the future. Joel stated that he has received the road profile electronically and Greg Dore also reviewed it during the Staff Review Committee meeting and said it was good. Harvey stated that he hopes that the developer understands that if they wait a long time to propose the road to the town then the ordinance may have changed in the meantime and they would have to make changes to the road. Mr. Boynton said that they understand.

Motion by Stephen Gould to approve the Subdivision application submitted by Bessey Development Company for the 11-lot Palmer Heights Subdivision. Seconded by Harvey Austin. Motion passed 4-0.

Motion by Harvey Austin to forego the reading of the Findings of Facts. Seconded by Steve St. Pierre. Motion passed 4-0.

B. Discussion and decision on the Site Plan application submitted by Renergetica for the proposed solar array to be located at 369 & 371 West Front Street. (Assessor's Map 8, Lots 2 & 2-3)

Steve Conley asked if anybody had any questions regarding this project. Harvey asked if this project is under the 5MW to be considered tax free. Justin Vanderbroeck said that it is under the 5 MW threshold. Joel said he wanted to confirm the change in the tree buffer along the entrance. He asked if they are removing the buffer completely from the Northeast side of the driveway. Justin explained that the tree buffer will be ended at the driveway instead of extending along the road. This was requested by the property owner since he had a dealer's license for his other property next to the project area and this is required in order for him to keep his dealers license. Steve Conley asked what size trees are going to be planted. Justin said they will probably be around 3-4 feet tall so they can get established well. Steve Conley said that they have had issues with other solar projects in town not putting large enough trees in to block the view of the abutters. There have also been concerns about making sure the trees don't die and are maintained. He asked if they had a plan for this in the application. Justin said there isn't a landscape maintenance plan in there but they are happy to have it as a condition of approval. Justin also said that he has a call into the abutter that had the concerns but hasn't heard back from him yet. He said when he did speak with him last, they had talked about giving him some money to be able to plant some trees on his own property to block the view. Justin said the developer has discussed giving the abutter \$5,000.00 to be able to purchase and plant the trees on his own property which would block the view better than planting them on the project site. Harvey said that would be very nice of them to do. Steve Conley said they can put that as a condition of approval. Steve St. Pierre asked if the 5-foot setback rule will apply to this project since it is involving 2 separate land

owners. Harvey said he thought that if the materials were not combustible then they could waive that requirement. Bryan said that is correct and he can certainly work with the developer on that.

Motion by Harvey Austin to approve the Site Plan application submitted by Renergetica for the Front Street Solar project with the following conditions:

1. Enter into an agreement with Mr. Johnson (South-west side abutter) to provide compensation up to \$5,000.00, for planting of a vegetative buffer on his property.
2. The vegetative buffer will be removed from the Northeast side of the entrance driveway.
3. The applicant shall maintain the vegetative buffer to be an effective barrier for the life of the project.

Seconded by Steve St. Pierre. Motion passed 3-0-1. (Stephen Gould abstained)

Motion by Steve St. Pierre to forego the reading of the Findings of Facts. Seconded by Harvey Austin. Motion passed 4-0.

C. Discussion and decision on the request from Revision Energy for an extension on their site plan approval for the Eaton Mountain Rd. Solar Project which was approved on December 1, 2020.

Nate Niles from Revision Energy explained why they are requesting an extension on this project. He stated that despite all of the work they have been doing on the project to get it completed, the state is now doing a study to see how all of the connections from the solar farms are going to affect the capacity on the grid. This new “cluster study” will push back their timeline for completion of this project because they have to wait for the results of the study first. Nate said that they are looking at not having the study completed until October 2021 now which causes at least a 9-month delay in their project. He said they wanted to be proactive in requesting the extension now instead of waiting until the last minute.

Harvey said they just went through this with the KVCAP project and gave them an extension so it’s only fair that this project gets one extension also. Steve Conley said there is a difference in reasons for the 2 projects requesting extensions. This project on Eaton Mountain is being held up by the State of Maine study which is beyond their control. The KVCAP project was held up because they never started it. Steve Conley asked how the State’s study impacts the project and if it could prevent them from doing it at all. Nate said it very well could prevent them from doing it if the study finds that the regional infrastructure isn’t capable of handling the solar project and its not cost effective to upgrade the infrastructure.

Motion by Harvey Austin to grant a 6-month extension for the Eaton Mountain Solar Project. Seconded by Matt Smith. Motion passed 3-0-1. (Stephen Gould abstained)

4) ITEMS BY THE PUBLIC:

Bryan read an email sent by Kim Gray to the Planning Board regarding the Eaton Mountain Solar project.

5) COMMUNICATIONS:

None

6) NEW BUSINESS:

None

7) UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

None

8) COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE:

A) Review final draft of the Transportation section.

Joel said this is an updated version from after meeting with Greg Dore and getting a lot of good information from him. Joel asked if everyone could take the time and look through it and let him know if anything needs to be changed. If no changes are needed then they can consider this section completed and move onto the next one.

9) ITEMS BY:

• **SELECTMEN:**

• **DEPARTMENT HEADS:**

Bryan said that there is a bill currently in the legislature regarding tiny homes. He said this bill would basically remove the municipality's authority to be able to regulate such things as setbacks, septic requirements and building codes on these tiny homes which in turn would impact the town greatly. Tiny homes are typically 400 sq. ft. and be placed under the same rules as campers and RV's.

• **MEMBERS:**

Harvey asked what is happening with the structure down by the Eddy that Maine Water has. It doesn't really blend in with the surroundings like the Planning Board had requested. Travis Bickford from Maine Water said that is the reason he is here tonight. He would like to get some suggestions from the Planning Board. Travis said they are looking to plant some vegetation. Harvey suggested painting the building brown or green so it blends in better than white vinyl siding.

Stephen Gould mentioned that after looking at all the paper tonight from these projects, they should really look into going digital. Bryan said that the ordinance does allow them to receive digital copies but it also still requires the 8 paper copies. Steve Conley said they should still look into using tablets. Harvey said he doesn't mind using a tablet as long as it's simple to use.

• **CHAIRMAN:**

• **STAFF:**

Joel said they have a Staff Review Committee meeting coming up on May 25th for the Minor Site Plan for 12 Madison Avenue and the Stevens Road Solar.

9) ADJOURNMENT:

Motion by Harvey Austin to adjourn at 7:00 p.m., Seconded by Stephen Gould.

Motion passed 4-0.

Minutes approved on June 1, 2021

Chairman
