

**TOWN OF SKOWHEGAN
PLANNING BOARD
MEETING MINUTES**

September 1, 2020

7:00 P.M.

Council Room, Municipal Building

PRESENT:

Steve Conley, Chairman
Todd Smith, Vice Chairman
Stephen Gould, Secretary
Steve St. Pierre
Kris Laney
Cynthia Kirk, Recording Secretary

ABSENT: Joel Greenwood, Planner
Brady Chapman, Harvey Austin

PUBLIC PRESENT:

Bryan Belliveau, Code Enforcement Officer
Stephen Barrett, Barrett Energy
Kevin Galbraith

Steve Conley, Chairman opened the public hearing, at 7:05 PM, to hear any comments or questions on the proposed Site Plan Application for MSD Galbraith, LLC submitted by Barrett Energy Resources Group located at 83 Norridgewock Avenue. He explained that comments on this proposed subdivision will be received via Facebook live as well as conference call by calling 1-833-623-0145 and enter participant code 635348. (There were system issues with the conference calling phone so Steve Conley gave the public a cell phone number they could call to ask questions or comment on this project).

Stephen Barrett from Barrett Energy Resources Group gave a brief description of the proposed site plan. He said the project is located on a parcel of land that is about 104 acres. They are looking to lease approximately 19.4 acres for the ground mounted solar array. It is a 7.367-megawatt DC facility. There will be 15675 solar panels tilted due South. There is a fixed racking system for the panels and there will be a 7-foot chain-link fence surrounding the project. Stephen said they have worked with the local fire department and will be installed a lockbox for them to access the site in case of an emergency. The site will be accessed by a 15-foot wide gravel road. The power produced by the facility will be run down the poles on Norridgewock Avenue into a small CMP tap facility.

Steve Conley asked if anyone from the public would like to comment or ask questions. No comments or questions were received from the public.

Todd Smith asked if there was only one access point to the facility. Stephen Barrett said yes there is only one access road off of Norridgewock Avenue. Stephen Gould asked if the easements will be on the existing road. Stephen Barrett said yes.

Steve Conley closed the public hearing at 7:11 pm

The Board shall organize at its first regular meeting after the annual Town Meeting, a Chairman, a Vice-Chairman, and a Secretary each shall be elected by a majority vote, who shall serve until the next annual meeting.

Steve Conley opened the discussion on the nominations.

Todd Smith nominated Steve Conley for Chairman, seconded by Kris Laney.

Motion passed 4-0.

Stephen Gould nominated Todd Smith as Vice-Chairman, seconded by Steve St. Pierre.

Motion passed 4-0.

Todd Smith nominated Stephen Gould as Secretary, seconded by Steve St. Pierre.

Motion passed 4-0.

1) QUORUM:

Planning Board Meeting called to order at 7:11 P.M. Quorum was present.

2) MINUTES OF THE August 4, 2020 PLANNING BOARD MEETING TO BE APPROVED:

Motion by Todd Smith to approve the August 4, 2020 Planning Board meeting minutes, with a correction to the spelling of Steve Conley's name on page one. Seconded by Steve Gould. Motion passed 4-0.

3) SITE PLAN / SUBDIVISION

A) Discussion and decision on the proposed Site Plan Application submitted by Barrett Energy Resources Group on behalf of MSD Galbraith, LLC for the MSD Galbraith Solar project to be located at 83 Norridgewock Avenue.

Steve Conley asked if the Planning Board members had any other questions before they voted on this project.

Kris Laney asked if this site is currently mostly wooded or field. Stephen Barrett said it is some of both. He said that the area they are putting the solar array did have some wooded areas that have been harvested but it also had some field areas. Kris asked if there is still a snowmobile trail on the property. Kevin Galbraith said he hasn't maintained it on his property and he kind of started telling people no when they were driving across his lawn. However, he can't really stop them from going across the top of his property unless he sits there all day. Kris asked if this solar project will block them from going across his property. Kevin said if they do try to go across his property then they will have to go along the side of the fencing for the solar project. Kris also asked if they do any plowing within the fenced area. Stephen Barrett said no. They will only be plowing the access road.

Steve Conley asked about the area above the proposed project and if that is marked off for future development. Stephen Barrett said it is a possibility that future solar panels could go in that area but that would be a completely different project and they would come back to the Planning Board if that happens.

Todd Smith asked if they will be using local contractors for this project. Stephen Barrett said they always try to use local contractors because it is more cost effective for them and also promotes economical growth in the area.

Motion by Stephen Gould to approve the Site Plan Application for the MSD Galbraith Solar Project as presented. Seconded by Todd Smith. Motion passed 4-0.

Cindy explained that since Joel is not here tonight, he will send the Findings of Facts at a later time. The Planning Board signed the plans.

4) ITEMS BY THE PUBLIC:

Bryan Belliveau said that he received a call from Kim and Dan Gray who lives on the Eaton Mountain Road. She expressed her concerns about the proposed Eaton Mountain Solar project that will be coming into the Planning Board. She said they really hope that the Planning Board will work on an ordinance to help control all of these solar projects going in everywhere. Bryan said that Kim and her husband have lived on Eaton Mountain for 20+ years and are not happy about having to look at solar panels across from their property.

Steve St. Pierre said he can understand their concern but there really isn't anything they can do now about the project on Eaton Mountain Rd. now since they don't have an ordinance in place and they have already started the application process.

Bryan said he thinks that with the solar projects that have already been approved in town as well as the Eaton Mountain one, the amount that the substations can take is pretty much maxed out.

Kris Laney said he definitely understands where these property owners are coming from and feels bad for them. However, at this point there isn't much that the Planning Board can do. He hopes that in the future that the citizens of Skowhegan will be more involved with what is happening in town and not just when it affects them personally. He said there was only about 80 people at the town meeting compared to the actual population of over 8000. He stressed more people need to be involved in the decisions being made for this town.

Steve Conley said that even though they can't stop the Eaton Mountain project from happening, they are able to work with the developer as far as buffering the project and having the least impact on the abutting properties. He said they also have to be careful of infringing on the rights of the property owners to develop their properties as well.

Steve Conley asked Bryan when Revision Energy will be coming back to the Planning Board with their full application for Eaton Mountain Road. Bryan said they mentioned in the next 45-60 days. Steve Conley would like to do a Site Visit once the application is received.

5) COMMUNICATIONS:

None

6) NEW BUSINESS:

A) Discussion and decision on the Shoreland Zoning Permit submitted by Dione Krieger for a lot on the Back Road (Assessor's Map 17, Lot 6).

Bryan said he went out and looked at this property and the only other option that the owners would have is to install a \$50,000-\$60,000 bridge upstream on the other side of the property. He said that option would actually impact the waterway more then what they are proposing to do in this Shoreland Zoning application. He said it has been a pretty dry summer so it is hard to get a good sense how much water flows through there. He has also talked to the owner about installing riprap and planting once the driveway is completed. Bryan said this is the only economical and responsible way he can the see the owners accessing the property.

Stephen Gould said his only concern is if the owners have contacted CMP about using that access road. He knows sometimes CMP will have concerns about how close they are working to their lines and wires. Bryan said he asked the owners but have not heard back from them on that. Todd asked if they should wait until we hear back from the owners about CMP. Bryan explained that by them approving the permit it does not absolve the owners from having to get approval from CMP. That is more of a civil issue between the owners and CMP.

Motion by Todd Smith to approve the Shoreland Zoning permit submitted by Dione Krieger. Seconded by Kris Laney. Motion passed 3-1. (Stephen Gould opposed)

7) UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

8) ITEMS BY:

a) SELECTMEN:

None

b) DEPARTMENT HEADS:

Bryan said that the Shoreland Zoning ordinance amendments were approved this past weekend at town meeting. Now Gail Pelotte has to send an attested copy to DEP for their approval.

c) MEMBERS:

Steve St. Pierre said he wished he had been able to attend the town meeting.

Stephen Gould said that the Fireworks Ordinance passed at town meeting surprisingly. So, this would be the time, if the Selectmen approved them to do so, to make changes to it since it was in fact a draft that was approved.

Todd Smith said that the Needle Exchange Ordinance also passed at town meeting which is a good thing. He said he has been a longtime treasurer for Senator Brad Farrin and gets copied on a lot of email correspondence that goes on. He said there has been a lot of discussion taking place with Gordon Smith who is the Opioid Response Director for the governor. Todd said that Gordon has weighed in a lot on this ordinance they just passed. He read an email from Redington Fairview to Gordon that was sent today stating that RFGH had discussed with the people that want to run the needle exchange site about using the hospital campus for a location. RFGH stated that these individuals made it clear to them that the hospital was not a good site for them because it was not private, discreet or confidential. Todd said that they had hoped that the hospital would have been the best site for the needle exchange program.

Todd said he was also copied on an email that Sheriff Lancaster sent out to all of the Somerset County Boards of Selectmen and town managers regarding Maine Access Point which is the group that got approval from the State to have a needle exchange in Skowhegan to begin with. Sheriff Lancaster also shared a screen shot of a Facebook post on the Maine Access Point Group's page. This screen shot showed harm reduction tips for people who are cutting or selling drugs during COVID-19 times. Todd read the post and it explained to people how to score drugs and not get caught by the police as well as cutting their drugs. Todd said the Maine Access Point Group is the group that Gordon Smith and the governor have deemed fit to run this needle exchange program in Maine towns.

Steve Conley said they should somehow bring the federal agents into this and see what they say. He then showed the Facebook post to the camera. He said this Maine Access Point Group is not about helping people but is in the drug racket themselves.

d) **CHAIRMAN:**

e) **STAFF:**

9) **ADJOURNMENT:**

Motion by Todd Smith to adjourn at 7:59 p.m., Seconded by Stephen Gould.
Motion passed 4-0.

Minutes approved on October 6, 2020.

Chairman

