



Planning Board Meeting Minutes Thursday, August 20th at 7:00 p.m.

Committee Members Present: Benjamin Pendleton, Andrew Poland, Andrea Perley, Patricia Jennings (via Zoom), and Jeff Eilenberg (via Zoom)

Committee Members Absent: 2 Alternate Positions (Still unknown)

Also Present: Jessica Westhaver, Joseph Rose, Chris Byers (Boyle & Associates), and Dale Knapp (Boyle & Associates)

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m. by Benjamin Pendleton

Old Business –

- **Solar Farm Review – Finalize Recommendation to Selectboard**

Chris Byers and Dale Knapp from Boyle & Associates were available for any additional questions for the board.

- The board revisited the charge from the Selectboard which was to gather information on impacts of incoming solar farms and review the building fee schedule to determine if a new category should be added for solar farms and what the fee should be.
- The board first reviewed how a fee would be applied for solar farms. Joseph Rose stated that after review of the Land Use Ordinance, it seems most appropriate to charge on square foot based on ground coverage, similar to decks. Solar farms do not have much impact on the ground itself other than the posts that are installed to hold the panels. There is no concrete base or underlying structure. The ground coverage approach would account for the fact that solar panels are installed at an angle.
- Byers and Knapp confirmed the solar panels to be installed at the first proposed site would be stationary and would not tilt/move to the changing location of the sun's position. They are permanently angled in the most beneficial position for full daylight capture.
- Byers and Knapp shared additional information on the specific project on Map 008 Lots 023-C & 060 to aid the board in their decision.
 - Project costs will be approximately 4 million dollars.
 - Will take between 4 and 6 months to build
 - Minimal impact to surrounding neighborhoods
 - Unable to hear panels once more than 30 feet away
 - One maintenance truck will check on the property 4 times a year, therefore no traffic increase
 - No power storage on site
- Andrea Perley raised questions to the board from a Real Estate and assessment perspective. Solar farms need larger areas of open land.
 - Do incoming solar farms diminish the availability to families who desire the purchase of large parcels?
 - Do incoming solar farms decrease the potential for new subdivisions?

Rose reminded the board the current substation in Bristol, which was built in 2016, would only support up to 3 solar farms, or up to 12 megawatts.

- The board asked Byers and Knapp about the requirement of decommissioning plans. They stated there is no current requirement or regulation that a decommissioning plan be in place, however it is common that they are a part of the contract with the landowner. They suggested that it would not be out of the ordinary for a Town to require or request decommissioning plans with building applications of solar farms as project managers are anticipating their requirement.
- The board began their discussion on what to recommend to the Selectboard. Everyone agreed that it did not seem appropriate to react to an application that had already been submitted and propose a separate fee specifically for solar farms. Rose presented a possible option of an overall increase of \$0.05 to specific categories on the building permit fee schedule. He let the board know that there had been no fee increases in his 5.5 years with the Town. The only change was the fee for category “Commercial or Industrial (unheated)” which was \$0.25 when he started but had been lowered to \$0.15 to differentiate between heated and unheated commercial buildings. After conversation, the board decided it would only be appropriate to make a recommendation specifically having to do with solar farms, and not the entire building fee schedule.
- The board agreed to present a memo to the Selectboard with their recommendation. Jessica Westhaver would type the memo, have the board review and approve, and then submit. The final agreement from the board is as follows:

Solar farms appear to have no negative environmental impacts and would provide benefits to the Town in the forms of permit fee revenue and provide a power option to Bristol residents. The board recommends an increase of \$0.05 to the Building Fee Permits in only the category of “Commercial or Industrial (unheated)”, which would bring the fee from \$0.15 to \$0.20. This category would cover ground mounted solar arrays, and to be charged based on the square feet of ground coverage.
- **VOTE:** Pendleton made a motion to approve the recommendations as discussed to the Selectboard by memo; Poland seconded. Approved 5-0.

House Keeping –

- **Minute Approval –**

VOTE: Pendleton made a motion to approve the minutes from the August 20th, 2020 as written; Poland Seconded; Perley and Eilenberg abstained; all in favor. Approved 3-0-2

Next Meeting –

- Subdivision Modification – Hatchtown (Map 008 Lots 011-H, 011-I, and 011-J)
- Alternate Positions

Pendleton made motion to adjourn the meeting; Poland seconded. Meeting adjourned at 7:55PM. The next meeting is scheduled for Thursday, September 17th, 2020.

Respectfully submitted,
Jessica Westhaver
Staff Liaison

PLANNING BOARD APPROVED: _____