Town of Hinesburg
Planning Commission
November 25, 2015
Approved 12/9/15

Members Present: Dennis Place, Maggie Gordon, Aaron Kimball, Joe Iadanza, James Donegan, Kyle Bostwick. Members Absent: Russell Fox, Rolf Kielman, Jeff French.

Also present: Alex Weinhagen (Director of Planning & Zoning) and Freeda Powers (Recording Secretary).

Public Present: Bill Marks, Marilyn Brown, Bruce Genereaux (Green Mountain Community Solar), Clary Franko (SunCommon).

Joe I. chaired the meeting, which was called to order at 7:33pm.

Agenda Changes: There were no changes to the agenda. There were no public comments for non-agenda items.

Solar Array Proposals: Clary Franko, from SunCommon, described a solar array proposal on property owned by Marilyn Brown on Fletcher Farm Road. She described the proposal, which takes up an approximate 0.84acre footprint and consists of several ground mounted fixed panels generating a total of 150kw. She said that is roughly enough power to represent 20-30 single family homes. She described a membership agreement which keeps the power local and allows "first dibs" to Hinesburg residents. She said this is but one more way for local landowners to keep their land productive. The Board was given a copy of SunCommon's Good Neighbor Agreement document which reviews and acclaims the company's mission, goals, priorities and promises. The Board was shown examples of other arrays, and parcel maps of the Brown lot. They viewed natural resources on the property.

Alex W. explained the Public Service Board's role in review and the Town's voice in such. James D. asked how these larger solar array projects relate to the recently updated storm water regulations, specifically, in regards to the 10,000 sq. ft. impervious surface trigger. Alex W. said regardless, these applications remain under the PSB review. Therefore, he added, he feels the most effective comments to make will be those that are framed around their review standards.

Maggie G. asked about the possibility of the site being revisited/added to by the applicants in the future. In such a way, she said, these medium size projects could grow in size (and associated impacts). Clary F. said in this particular case that is unlikely.

Bill M. voiced his concerns with this proposal. In particular, he is concerned with visibility impacts from his home and negative impacts to his property value and quality of life. He noted the Town Plan, which provides a visibility map. He said the SunCommon Good Neighbor Agreement indicates adequate communication, etc. with community members. However, he only knew about this application when he received certified mail. He also voiced concerns with changes to the building envelope and suggested that the applicants may likely need to come before the DRB for a revision.

James D. said he feels that solar arrays of this size are appropriate for Hinesburg. He went on to say he feels it is unreasonable to think we can hide them from everybody's view. Maggie G. agreed, saying we want to encourage this type/scale of renewable energy development in Hinesburg. Joe I. said he does

understand Bills' concerns. The State allows the Town to have some input regarding screening, but we currently have nothing to apply there. The PSB may consider input based on reflection of some regulation, standard, or ordinance, but they are not likely to consider in the same regard a letter or commentary.

Kyle B. said from the larger view, he would like to see if we can get more Town input in the review process. He voiced some frustration, saying we do have a plan for uses of land, and it would be nice to be able to say so. Alex W. said that would be a basis for comment on a project—if it in that way does not comply with some aspect of our Town Plan. Bill M. said the Planning Commission has the power to write this in an Ordinance, etc. to outline the best places for siting such solar arrays.

Aaron K. asked Clary F. what is the company's process to uphold that Good Neighbor Agreement document. Clary F. replied that their first priority is in fact listening to concerns, and maintaining panels etc. Aaron K. asked about the panels; do they think it's likely that progress in technology will result in smaller panels and thereby a smaller footprint. Clary F. said progress in technology is not as rapid as they might hope and that the panels may change slightly but not likely by a large amount, not enough to impact significantly the overall project footprint. Aaron K. asked about the need for 3-Phase Power. Clary F. said it is not required for this size array.

James D. noted Primary Ag Soils impacted by many of these types of solar array proposals. Alex W. reminded the Board that Prime Ag Soils are considered a secondary resource which in subdivision review means that developers should try to minimize their impacts. Again, remember, this is also something the PSB is not concerned with.

Joe I. said he understands the concerns such as voiced tonight by Bill M. However, he said, he does not see that the Planning Commission is in a position to influence the PSB review in those ways yet. We can work towards an Ordinance, he said. Kyle B. suggested the Board's input be positive and authentic. Dennis P. said he personally would prefer to see projects like this than others more visible and of larger scale. He said we listen to neighbor concerns but we have to view projects based on visibility impacts from public roadways, not from private property. He said he doesn't like seeing them put in Prime Ag Soil areas, he reiterated his desire for these projects to be sited on land not usable for other purposes.

Kyle B. **made a motion to address the Public Service Board to say that we approve of this type of project and to specifically address aspects which we find respectable and admirable such as notification of adjoining land owners, respect to primary and secondary resource areas, proper and adequate screening, respecting setbacks, viewsheds and so on.** Maggie G. **seconded the motion.** The Board **voted 6-0.**

Bruce Genereaux spoke to the Board next. He described a current solar array proposal on behalf of Green Mountain Community Solar. This project, located on Lorraine & Kelly Donley's property on Apple Ridge Road, would be another 150kw array but this one would have a slightly larger footprint; about 1.38acres.

After viewing parcel maps and a brief review of the proposal, the Board mainly wanted to know why the applicants were proposing clearing instead of placing the array outside of the vegetated areas. Bruce G. explained the company's considerations towards visibility and reflected on input from the landowners. He added that the company does propose to leave a perimeter of vegetation such that the array will be

"islanded" amongst some 25' buffer of growth. Additionally, he said, the company takes great pride in adequate and proper screening and has taken the liberty to invest in plenty of breathable green fabric which they install in fencing around the installations.

The Board viewed the parcel with elevations shown. Bruce said the project measures 12' at the top edge of the installation.

Aaron K. **made a motion to address the Public Service Board to say that we approve of this type of project and to specifically address aspects which we find respectable and admirable such as notification of adjoining land owners, respect to primary and secondary resource areas, proper and adequate screening, respecting setbacks, viewsheds and so on.** Dennis P. **seconded the motion.** The Board **voted 6-0.**

Miscellaneous Zoning Revisions/Clarification Topics: Maggie G. reported back to the Board regarding a recent conference she attended on Livability. This, she said, included aspects such as mixed-use, compact development, affordable smaller homes, etc. The Board briefly discussed the idea of Tiny Homes. Among considerations were: to require foundations, connection to utilities, mobility. There was some confusion as to how to classify such Tiny Homes; are they to be considered under regulations of R.V.s (Campers), Mobil Homes (Trailers), or are they indeed simply small structures? Additionally, how to consider them in regards to the state's allowance for landowners to build Accessory Structures and how does the Town address such? The State allows one accessory structure, Alex W. said, but most people typically do not take this to literally mean building another structure, and most will simply modify a space above an existing garage etc. The Board reviewed section 5.19 and 5.20 regarding camping units. After some discussion, the Board felt it appropriate to clear up language in the camping vehicle section.

Minutes from 10/28: Aaron K. **made a motion to approve as amended** the minutes of 10/28. James D. **seconded the motion.** The board **voted 5-0.** Dennis P. abstained.

Other Business:

Alex W. reminded the Board of upcoming Shelburne Zoning Regulation changes.

Pat Mainer submitted favorable comments to the Brown project.

Joe I. mentioned that the Lafournier property is close (less than $30,000 to go) towards a conservation easement.

Maggie G. made a **motion to adjourn.** Aaron K. **seconded** the motion. The meeting adjourned at 9:37pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Freeda Powers, Recording Secretary