

Town of Hinesburg
Planning Commission
May 25, 2016
Approved June 22, 2016

Members Present: Joe Iadanza, Maggie Gordon, Dennis Place, Rolf Kielman, Jeff French, Russell Fox.

Members Absent: James Donegan.

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

Public Present: Dorothy Pellett, Kristi & Tim Brown, Lin & Tim Isham, Brian Thibault, Bill Marks, Brett Johnson.

Joe I. chaired the meeting, which was called to order at 7:35pm.

Agenda Changes: None.

Public Comments for Non-agenda Items: None.

Magee Hill Rd Solar Array Proposal: Ctd from 5/11.

The Board discussed the possible recommendation to the Public Service Board (PSB) and the Applicant.

The Board acknowledged correspondence from Alex W. to Encore (Applicant), from neighboring land owners to Encore in which they submit a revised version of the plans and from Encore responding to the neighbors and the neighbors response to Encores' feedback.

Maggie G. said she is in favor of the original application which she appreciates as a truly community solar project sited in the most part to protect primary and secondary resource areas. The proposed berm, plantings and the natural slope and grade of the site aide in her main concern which would be size in proximity to the roadway. She is in favor of the Commission forwarding a letter of support.

Jeff F. said feedback from the neighbors is good, however he reminded all to remain cognizant of the role the Commission and in fact the Town play in PSB review of solar projects (which role is limited in power and influence). He went on to say that for him, the project is hard to visualize without seeing and he voiced concerns with potential impact to neighboring property values and setbacks. However, he notes, the project does meet the requirements and definitions which it is required to meet.

Joe I. concurred with Jeff's comments.

Dennis P. asked if all neighbors are in agreement with the newly submitted revised plans submitted to the Applicant on behalf of several neighbors. There were 3 non-abutting parties in agreement. Dennis P. concurred with Jeff's comments as well and encouraged compromise among Encore and the neighbors.

Brett Johnson spoke from the audience, voicing his concern with road frontage and impact to property values.

Rolf K. agreed with Jeff in that further visual info would be helpful. If the berm and landscaping is reasonably well done and feels that from the road, the project will be well hidden. He feels as if the project fits with the language they have crafted as a Commission. He senses that other than going east, the array can be substantially not visual most times of the year. He would like to see vegetation profiles go much further up the hill to the south.

Joe I. said we wanted screening to break up the project, not entirely hide it. What is planned with a berm and landscaping are adequate in his view and are a pretty substantial screening install. He would like 4 season screening on the sides. He said the 100' setback can work—he does not want to see a lot of trees cut. He is in favor of a letter to the PSB in favor of the plan noting as Maggie G. said the specifics in the plan which we support (including the berm), encourage conservation and screening to the west.

Russel F. encourages the berm over additional forest cutting.

The Board discussed the species in the proposed vegetation plans which are mostly deciduous.

Chuck R. spoke from the audience, saying that the Energy Committee tried to coordinate with the neighbors and he feels the process has been a good. We endorse their proposal, he said. He said this is a very large solar project in a rural area and is setting the precedent for the Town. He said the Energy Committee supports the project and wants renewable energy in Hinesburg but feel strongly that neighbors should be heard and part of the discussion. He feels the Town should require a 3D model. Do not endorse as is.

Bill Marks spoke from the audience, saying he feels the PSB is under pressure to open up to local opinions.

Rolf K. **made a motion for the Planning Commission to take no action.** Jeff F. **seconded the motion.** Maggie G. said she disagrees with the motion, and in fact this is exactly what we as a Town do want—a local energy cooperative, state credit, etc. She encouraged the Commission to point out what they like about the proposal while acknowledging outstanding issues and encouraging cooperation with neighboring landowners. Joe I. said he agrees with Maggie. Outreach and compromise would be appropriate. He reiterated that he is not a proponent of cutting trees. The Board **voted 2-4.** Russell F. and Rolf K. in favor; Maggie G., Joe I., Jeff F. and Dennis P. against.

Jeff F. **made a motion that the Planning Commission shall submit a letter to the PSB and Encore to include basic concepts of the project which are in line with what we want and to encourage Encore to continue ongoing discussions regarding design with neighbors.** Maggie G. **seconded the motion.** The Board **voted 4-2.** MG, JI, JF, DP in favor; RK, RF against.

Jeff F. **made a motion that the Planning Commission shall submit a letter to the PSB and Encore to include basic concepts of the project which are in line with what we want to include lack of visibility from major town roads, above average screening with addition of berm, the local nature of retaining Renewable Energy Credits and to encourage Encore to continue ongoing discussions regarding design with neighbors and to incorporate recommendations from Staff to make accommodations where possible.** Joe I. **seconded the motion.** The Board **voted 6-0.**

Town Plan—Review Draft 1 (ct'd from 4/27, 5/11, 5/18): The Board continued its review of the Town Plan draft. Picking up in Chapter #6: Community Facilities & Services.

The Board agreed Chapter 6 pg. 64 should be updated to reflect the new water allocation ordinance.

Pg. 65: the Board added information about Ammonia limits.

Pg. 68: HCS expanded in '85: Check dates for accuracy.

Rolf K. suggested subheadings to make formatting easier to follow.

Minutes:

Joe I. **made a motion to approve as written the minutes of 4/27/16.** Dennis P. **seconded the motion.** The Board **voted 6-0.**

Maggie G. **made a motion to approve as amended the minutes of 5/4/16.** Rolf K. **seconded the motion.** The Board **voted 6-0.**

Joe I. **made a motion to approve as amended the minutes of 5/11/16.** Rolf K. **seconded the motion.** The Board **voted 6-0.**

Joe I. **made a motion to approve as amended the minutes of 5/18/16.** Dennis P. **seconded the motion.** The Board **voted 5-0.** Jeff F. abstained.

Other Business: Joe I. said the PC in Monkton will be discussing PUD's and the discussion may be helpful to have between towns.

The meeting adjourned at 10pm

Respectfully submitted,
Freeda Powers, Recording Secretary