

## Minutes of the Planning Board Public Hearing

### Town of Charlemont

3-29-12

Members Present:

Gisela Walker, Chair  
Daniel Miller, Alternate  
Trevor Mackie  
Stephen Ferguson  
Marguerite Willis

Members Absent:

Jerry Pratt

Also present were Micah Gold-Markel, of Solar States MA, LLC; applicant, Dave Marley of Diversified Construction; Contractor, Joshua Markel; applicant's father, Peter Curtis; property owner, Ken Hall; Fire Chief, Alan Booth; Conservation Commission, Diane Brancaccio of the Recorder, Catherine Fahy of the Shelburne Falls Independent and members of the public.

The meeting was called to order at 7:07 p.m.

The Board reviewed the final draft of their Planning Board Rules and Regulations. On a motion by Ferguson and seconded by Miller, the Rules and Regulations were passed 4:1, with Willis voting against.

The Board reviewed the minutes from their 3-15-12 meeting. On a motion by Walker and seconded by Mackie, the minutes were approved as written.

The Public Hearing was opened at 7:14 p.m. Walker read the public notice into the record and explained how the hearing would be conducted; noting that the applicant would make his presentation, the Board would weigh in and finally, members of the public would have a chance to speak. Walker went on to explain that they were a 5 member Board and that 4 positive votes would be needed in order to pass the Special Permit. Walker disclosed that one of the Board members (Trevor Mackie) is an abutter, which would be a conflict of interest, but noted that a legal procedure allows the Board to invoke the Rule of Necessity. Mackie stated that his property is on North River Road, making him a direct abutter but stated that he has no financial interest in the operation. Mackie also disclosed that he is employed by National Grid, the Power Company that will be connecting to the transmission lines on the project, but noted that he has no decision making ability for the company, and therefore is not in conflict as an employee.

Walker notified those present that the hearing can be continued, and will be posted but not advertised again. Walker introduced the Board then asked the applicants to introduce themselves.

Gold-Markel introduced himself and explained that he is proposing a 2.6 MW solar array installation at the old Drive-in site on Route 2. He gave a brief history of his Company and noted that some of the benefits to this site were that the site is vacant, has good drainage, and is near high-tension power lines with a sub-station nearby, that most of the trees that will be removed are scrub pine; that they had conducted wildlife and

endangered species studies, noting that the only thing found were some plants near the river and not in the area affected by the project.

The solar panels were then discussed. Gold-Markel showed one of the panels which will be ground-mounted on galvanized steel poles at a 25 degree angle, noting that each panel is 3 feet in height, will be stacked 4 high, in sets of 11 panels with a total height of about 12 feet, and that each array would be in blocks of 44 panels. He passed out a sheet on the statistics of the solar array, noting that there would be a total of 9,020 panels, the total size being 2615.80 kW) (2.6 MW), that there would be 28 rows of panels in total, with 25 feet in between rows for maintaining and servicing the panels 1,000-1500 houses could be powered. The substation would be located east of the existing warehouse, and the electricity would be inverted by 500kW Solectria inverters. Regarding glare: the panels would be low-reflection, would sit back 75 feet from the road, and that reflection should not be an issue. It was also noted that no wiring would show, as it will be attached to the back of the panels and inside conduit.

Next, the site was discussed. Gold-Markel showed the site and where the panels will be installed, noting that the entire perimeter will be fenced in completely. Dense screening will hide the panels from view, in keeping with a natural look and a high fence would be installed around the substation, per federal regulations. The solar panels would be maintained regularly, as well as maintenance of vegetation and plowing of the site, as necessary. There would be a video camera on site to be remotely monitored via the internet, and would be patrolled by security regularly.

Regarding access: It was discussed that the intent was to completely close off access to Route 2 and use an access road on North River Road, enabling the applicants to drive directly to the back of the site and warehouse. It was mentioned that the proposal would create local jobs during installation and maintenance and that the applicants were hoping to attract a business to lease the warehouse.

Gold-Markel passed out their decommissioning plan and commented that since technology may improve in the next 5 years, they may want to come back to the Board to discuss the removal or replacement of the old panels. It was noted that the silicone, glass, aluminum and copper the panels are comprised of are all recyclable.

Gold-Markel passed out and discussed their vegetation plan and statistics of the carbon dioxide offset by using solar power. It was also noted that the project was anticipated to bring in \$100,000.00 per year in taxes to the Town.

The Board then discussed questions and concerns with the panel configuration as well as the proposed access road. The Board asked the applicant to consider moving the road to another location, as the proposed road runs between two residences and would potentially generate a fair amount of additional traffic. The pros and cons of this were discussed.

The inverters were discussed, with it being noted that the inverters and transformers would sit on 50x50 concrete pads, and that since they would be sited in a valley, there would be minimal sound impact.

The Board then opened the hearing to public input. Abutter, Jeff Shaw asked about the location of the vegetated line. Gold-Markel explained that the vegetated screen would

be at the 25-foot setback line and that there would also be a fence between their screen and the arrays. Shaw stated that he has an issue with the new access road proposed and Ellen Shaw asked if abutters will have say on what type of business will lease the warehouse. The Board noted that when a new business goes in, it will require a special permit, in which abutters will be notified and have chance to weigh in.

Marjorie Porrovecchio asked about the humming noise emitting from the transformers and inverters. Gold-Markel responded that since they would be set inside the recessed area, he felt that they wouldn't be heard, and further noted that the transformers only run 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. and then shut down. The Board felt it a good idea to make a visit to an existing solar array site to ensure this.

Discussion ensued as to the fact that the new proposed access road would go in between two residences; those of Diego Rivera, 26 North River Road, and Bruce Dearborn, 28 North River Road. In order to address abutter concerns with the proposed access road, the Board scheduled a site visit with the Board, applicants and abutters at 6.15 pm before the next hearing.

It was discussed that there would be no signage except for high voltage warnings or identification signs. The applicant asked the Fire Chief to think about what type of access should be provided in the event of emergency, such as a Knox Box.

Discussion ensued as to the possibility of wildlife triggering the motion-activated lights and possibly disturbing abutters, and the Board requested that the applicants bring a plan, showing the height, location and sensitivity settings to the next hearing.

The applicants discussed ground cover, which they explained would be a 4-6" bed of wood chip mulch. The applicant then submitted their storm water management report, noting that there would be no negative impacts to adjacent properties.

Some of the abutters voiced concerns over the use of galvanized steel poles, which rust over time and can leach into soil and contaminate the surrounding wells. After further discussion, the applicant agreed to do a well test on the few properties in the area so it could be determined whether there were any effects in 5 years. Mackie then asked the applicant to bring to the next hearing MSDS sheets on galvanized steel, the solar panels, data sheets on the inverters, schematics and sensitivity settings of motion sensor lights, as well as more conclusive data on reflection and glare of the panels.

On a motion by Ferguson and seconded by Walker, the hearing was adjourned at 9:44 p.m. The hearing will be continued to Thursday, April 5, 2012 at 7:00 p.m. at the Hawlemont School Cafeteria. A site visit with the Board, the abutters and the applicants will precede the hearing at 6:15 p.m. at the property.

Respectfully Submitted,

Carlene Millett,  
Secretary to the Boards

These minutes are draft until approved by the Board.

## **Documents viewed in meeting of 3/29/12**

1. Minutes from 3/15/12 Planning Board meeting.
2. Planning Board Rules and Regulations.
3. Scale survey/site plan of property
4. Scale drawings of solar array laid over topological survey of site
5. Phase I Environmental Site Assessment
6. Solar Glare Study
7. Maintenance Plan
8. Decommissioning Plan
9. Solar Array Statistics
10. Storm water Management Plan

**\*Documents not attached to minutes are stored in their respective files in the Town Hall.**