

Walpole Planning Board Workshop Minutes Tuesday, November 27, 2018

Present: Chair Jeff Miller, Vice-Chair Robert Miller, Secretary James Aldrich, Selectboard Representative Steve Dalessio, Alternate Board Member Joanna Andros.

Recording: Marilou Blaine. These minutes are unapproved and will be reviewed at the regular December 2018 meeting for corrections, additions and/or omissions.

Topics: Conditional Use Permit. Solar Ordinance Draft 2.

The meeting opened at 7:05 pm. The group briefly discussed last month's workshop. Carol Olgilvie was a guest at the workshop. Mr. R. Miller said he had expected her to talk about the Land Analysis section of the Master Plan. Instead practically almost the entire hour was about conditional use permits, which would replace Special Exceptions needing recommendations from the Planning Board.

Mr. J. Miller said that Special Exceptions were working in Walpole and while CUP is used in Vermont, Vermont has different guidelines and regulations than New Hampshire. He said the Special Exception are a good check and balance between the two Boards – Planning and Zoning.

Mr. Dalessio said the town would never have had the same outcome on the Walker Road property if the town had a CUP instead of a Special Exception. There would have been some kind of compromise.

Solar Ordinance: Both the Planning and Zoning Boards decided they wanted to work on an ordinance for solar installations because of their increasing popularity. Both Board members received copies of a sample solar ordinance from Hollis, NH and a "Model Solar Zoning Ordinance and Guidance " from the NH Municipal Association.

At the first meeting a lot of ideas were thrown out and different kinds of installations were discussed. After realizing there was so much information out there and so many varieties of installations that it was decided a couple of members should cull together the information and put together a sample draft of an ordinance. The result was a draft solar ordinance put together by Jeff Colley and Joanna Andros.

A couple of people at the first meeting mentioned things that they wanted in the ordinance. That included definitions regard solar jargon and a graph from the "Model Solar Zoning ordinance and Guidance" that showed the different zoning districts and types of installations and what would be permitted or not permitted in each district.

Currently if homeowners wants to put an installation on their roofs or on their property, they go to the Town Offices for a permit. This permit allows the homeowners to install the panels. It also allows them to get an abatement on their property taxes.

Comments about the draft:

The draft is too long and too restrictive. It should be reduced to one and ½ pages. It should be simple and easily understandable. The townspeople don't want regulations that are too restrictive. This was evidenced when a historic district was suggested and voted down.

Home-based installations should be allowed without restrictions.

That comment brought out a prolonged discussion of having an approach centering on an installation that would not offend a neighbor.

Shouldn't there be some type of screening if it's in the face of a neighbor's view?

But then someone argued that if you neighbor painted his/her home pink, there was nothing you, as a neighbor, could do about it. So how was this different?

There are design guidelines in the site plan, so why shouldn't they be in the a solar ordinance?

Perhaps the Board should write some basic guidelines for considering a neighbor's view and include those guidelines on the permit.

There could be examples of screening ideas – either fencing or with shrubbery – that the installers could use so neighbors are not staring at solar panels.

The panels should be anti-glare.

For a couple of people at the meeting, the most important concern was with very large residential installations, and non-residential installations that would be solely for a commercial operation and the party would sell the electricity.

Should there be a maximum size?

In what districts should they be permitted?

Should there be a section in the Site Plan Review about large solar installations? If so the owner of an installation would need permission from the Planning Board and need to submit a site plan.

What about owners of non-conforming lots, such as the ones occurring in the Village? Should they be required to have roof-mounted panels? These lots are usually well under an acre, and there's not much space after a house, garage and maybe a shed are on the property.

When the installation is no longer operational, it should be removed.

To be continued at the January 2019 workshop. The Public is welcome to attend.

Respectfully submitted,
Marilou Blaine
Recording Secretary