

Walpole Planning Board Minutes
Town Hall
Tuesday, May 14, 2019
7 pm

Presiding Members: Chair Jeffrey Miller, Vice-chair, Dennis Marcom, Secretary James Aldrich, Jason Perron, Jeff Harrington, Jeff White, Steve Dalessio (Selectboard Representative). Alternates: Joanna Andros. Absent: Jeff Colley.

Recording: Marilou Blaine. These minutes are unapproved and will be reviewed at the June 2019 meeting for corrections, additions and/or omissions.

Meeting Opened: Mr. Miller called the meeting to order at 7 pm.

Roll Call: A full Board was present.

Minutes: April meeting and April workshop minutes: Corrections: On page 2, paragraph one, change ceiling to roof. Ms. Andros asked what was meant by the word "suggestion" in paragraph 7, page 3. Mr. Dalessio said the paragraph should read "the entrance to Red Barn Lane is really dark. Mr. Franks has had some discussions with Liberty Utilities about a street light at the entrance and if that was a suggestion from the Board Mr. Franks would go ahead and ask them." The suggestion was that Mr. Miller would have Mr. Franks ask Liberty Utilities about a street light at the entrance to Red Barn Lane. Mr. Marcom made a motion to accept the minutes of the regular minutes as amended and the minutes of the workshop as presented. Mr. Aldrich seconded the motion and the motion passed.

Old Business:

Catherine Harris/Mark Smith: Proposed mixed use on commercial and residential B property at 6 Ames Plaza Lane and Dearborn Circle. Map 12, Lot 55-21 backs up to Dearborn Circle.

Ms. Harris owns Wealth Management & CPAs LLC, located on Route 5 in Westminster Station, VT. It is a small professional office that serves Vermont and New Hampshire clients equally. The primary services include investments, taxation, CPA services, bookkeeping/payroll and business consulting. It has been operating for nearly 6 years. There are 4 personnel including Ms. Harris and sometimes an intern or a seasonal person.

The couple has a purchase agreement for the 6 Ames Plaza Lane property. Their goal is to build a mixed-use building (residential/commercial mix) on the land that would serve as both the new location of CHS Wealth Management and Catherine Harris and Mark Smith's personal residence. The property would have two driveways. A business driveway with 10 parking spaces and one handicapped space would have vehicles entering from Ames Lane and another driveway, entering from Dearborn Circle, for their personal use. The building will be 2,750 square feet.

The couple requested a Public Hearing for the June meeting. Mr. Aldrich made a motion to have a Public Hearing in June for the Harris/Smith proposal. Mr. Marcom seconded the motion and the motion passed.

Michael and Catherine Nerrie Boundary Line Adjustments. Last month Joe DiBernardo was at the meeting with a minor correction to the Catherine and Michael Nerrie map. Cheshire County Registry of Deeds accepted the new plans with the correction so there is no need to have another Public Hearing.

Community Solar Project at 310 Main Street - Chris Welcome and Chad Whitaker of Solar Clean Energy. Mr. Welcome said he's been in the solar energy business for 5 years and Mr. Whitaker has been working in this business for 2 years. Whitaker recently graduated from Andover Law School and his job is

to keep the company up to date on the ever-changing policies of the NH Legislature, Eversource, the Public Utilities Commission or anything in the energy sector.

Solar Clean recently partnered with OYA Solar. OYA has been in business 10 years and has worked in several states, very heavily in New York and Massachusetts, as well as Canada. OYA would be the company working with the towns, the Public Utility Companies regarding siting, zoning ordinances, building the facility etc. Community Solar helps with client and land acquisition.

Right now, Welcome is looking for sites that are 30 to 35 acres for a solar array. Earlier in the year the company was happy with a lot less property because there was a limitation on putting up solar projects of 1 Megawatt per site. Things changed legislatively in January and the NH Legislature is about to sign a bill that would allow 5 Megawatts per site. For investors bigger is better, Welcome said. So the company is now trying to get as many 5 Megawatt projects as it can. There's a wave right now in New Hampshire to have larger sites and therefore the smaller 1 Megawatt project will be put on "the back burner" for a while. The Walpole project at 310 Main Street is a 1 Megawatt project. Also, there's a huge cost in bringing in those high tension line lines to an area. To mitigate those costs, larger projects are more attractive. Therefore, to be considered for a project right now, more land has to be added to the 8 acres at 310 Main Street. Mr. Welcome is open to contacting the Achilles family that owns land adjacent to the 310 Main Street land, but he needs more land than what Achilles has. The type of land they are looking for is like 310 Main Street. It is deforested, not in a flood plain, near the center of town and flat.

Where does the energy go? In Walpole's case it would go to Liberty Utilities. The investors get a guaranteed payment and, right now, there's that 30 percent tax credit. New Hampshire has just restarted the tax credit but it will probably be depleted by January 2020. Then the rate will go down radically, maybe to 4 percent, and when you're talking millions, it's big money. Also, there a quota on megawatts a year. So you'll find a lot of towns are trying to move the permitting process along – getting its environmental impact in place, holding meetings, looking at where a site can go.

Mr. Marcom said he kept waiting for Mr. Welcome to make a proposal at this meeting, but until you get more pieces in the puzzle, you're not going to do anything in Walpole right now. Mr. Welcome agreed. Because of the way things have evolved in the state right now, projects in New Hampshire have changed. But, he said, "we'll come back to the Main Street property in a year."

Mr. Dalessio said the legislation hasn't been signed by the governor yet. Mr. Welcome said it's going to pass. It's veto proof. Right now, Mr. Welcome is talking to towns about the big picture and where they can collectively amass that much land of 20 to 30 acres. He suggested waste water facilities, landfills, school roofs, businesses in a town.

In creating this amalgam to add up to 5 Megawatts does the land need to be contiguous? Mr. Marcom asked. First they must all be getting their utilities from the same source and in Walpole's area that's Liberty Utilities. It doesn't matter if the land is next to each other. You can grab power from a field and then another field a mile away, but then you have to consider the cost of the transmission lines. Who are players in this? Mr. Marcom asked. OYA is doing the construction, procurement, maintaining panels, decommissioning, digging the holes, Mr. Welcome said. Clean Solar is the one who's looking for the land.

Whose is receiving financial benefit from these installations? Mr. Marcom asked. Mostly town-owned buildings and commercial properties and the landowners of where the project is. How does a town benefit? If it was a town-owned piece of land, it would benefit your taxes plus your electricity costs. All the really heavy power users are the benefactors at this early stage. The investors help to prop up the system and to find off takers. The benefits to a town are a long-term profit share agreement with a utility company to offset some costs. It would not be on the side of the land but on the side of the off taker. Liberty Utilities is now selling electricity at 1 kilowatt for 9.34 cents. A profit share holder would get a 1 cent tax rebate until 2040.

When decommissioning a site, the parts such as solar panels etc. are recycled and the land goes right back to what it was before being fitted for solar.

Mr. Dalessio said that the 310 Main Street property is in rural/ag zone and would need a Special Exception and site plan and that would take at least four months. Mr. Welcome said some of his projects take longer than that amount of time. He also said he can work in forested areas and tries to outsource all the material that is possible. "We try to keep it as local as possible."

Update on Bridge Memorial Walpole Library - Fred Ernst is Chairman of the Library Board. Justine Farara is the librarian. They made the presentation together.

Mr. Ernst said work on an update of the library will begin around the end of the month in May. The changes are a result of responses to a survey taken a couple of years ago. The footprint and facade will remain the same. The property hasn't been extended. All changes are to the interior of the building.

A major change will be the children's room that will be moved to the opposite side of the building and be considerably larger. The front room where the stacks are now will be the Carol and John Hubbard Room. It will have a capacity to seat 75 people for lectures and large meetings. The new stack room will have mobile stacks on tracks. Ms. Farara explained that currently there are three feet between stacks. These stacks will be compressed into one three-foot aisle. They will be electronically driven and she said there will be a bit of a learning curve on how to use them. Any stationary stacks in the room will be placed on track so they can become mobile in the future.

The room at the front with the large window and fireplace will become the Ken Burns room. There will be a special display of his works as well as posters and it will have a computer that will feed into his office so it allows for research on all of his movies, books and research material. This room is also where the knitters will continue to meet and where new books can be found. The circulation desk is now in the center of the library and a workroom for processing new material had been added. The previous workroom was in a closet. The patio will not be built because of its \$30,000 cost. The basement and attic will remain as they are and are not usable for library material. There's a section for public computers and digital materials.

Packing up books is already taking place and within just the last 48 hours of tonight's meeting volunteers had packed up 300 banana boxes with books. As of June 3, the library will be operating out of the second floor of the Town Hall and one-third of the library's collection will be available to take out. Construction should take about six months and volunteers are still needed to pack books.

Mr. Ernest said that libraries are not dead as is commonly thought. Ms. Farara said that circulation in April increased 20 percent from the same period last year.

Non-residential Solar Regulations: These regulations will be finalized at this month's workshop. Mr. Aldrich made a motion to have a Public Hearing in June to accept the new regulations and add them in the site plan. Mr. Perron seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously.

Complete Streets Grant for Sidewalk Project from school to firehouse: Mr. Miller said the grant looked well beyond the scope of the Planning Board.

Phase II of Abenaki Springs: Mr. Jack Franks, owner of the property of Abenaki Springs Phase I, said he couldn't talk about what is happening on the front lots because he is under a nondisclosure agreement. However, Abenaki Springs Phase II is starting within the next month and there will be 22 rental apartments.

Mr. Franks said that the new building will be built like the other one with modular technology. He said that building was built in the time allotted and on budget. He passed out a handout that he said shows that Abenaki Springs is the single most energy efficient building in New Hampshire. The entire building was

heated for \$7,000 for a year or \$50 per unit, per month. Aesthetically Abenaki Springs is one of the best rental units in Cheshire County, he said, and the Franks family invested \$250,000 of its own money in Abenaki Springs. "I'm in this for the long haul," he said. He thanked the Board for its patience and said workforce housing is truly needed.

Update of Master Plan: The Planning Board will start working on the Master Plan and begin by tackling the sections on Transportation and Housing. Planner Lisa Murphy will work with the Planning Board and the project has to be approved by her Board at Southwest Community Services. But, Mr. Miller said, everything is on track. Ms. Murphy will be at the June meeting to talk about what's involved. The first part will be a lot of staff work. The section on Land Use will be more hands on with the Planning Board.

Todd Stewart Solar Power Financial interested in putting panels on the old landfill. Mr. Miller did a walking tour of the landfill with Mr. Stewart. He said it seemed like it would be beneficial to the town. Also the manager of Cold River Materials joined the group. Cold River spends ten to eleven grand a month on power and they might want to partner up with Stewart as well. There are a lot of possibilities. The power hookup is farther than expected. It is near the recycling station and would cost \$50,000 to hook up, but it's not a deal breaker, Miller said. It's up to the Selectmen to consider the project. Mr. Dalessio said that the town spends \$40,000 a month just on street lights.

Mr. Aldrich made a motion to adjourn. Mr. Perron seconded the motion and it was approved by the rest of the Board.

Respectfully submitted,
Marilou Blaine

Handout: Info on Len-Tex Solar Farm

cc: WPB, ZBA, Town Offices, Walpolean, www.walpolenh.us
Posted: Inside Town Offices, on the bulletin board outside Post Office.