

BARRE TOWN PLANNING COMMISSION MINUTES

The Town of Barre Planning Commission held their regular meeting on **Wednesday, February 21 , 2018** beginning at **7:00** p.m. at the **Municipal Building**, Lower Websterville.

Members Present:

Cedric Sanborn George Clain
Byron Atwood Charlie Thygesen Sr
Chris Violette Debra Pierce

Members Absent:

Claire Duke

Staff Present:

Emily Marineau

Others Present:

CHANGES TO THE AGENDA:

Violette would like to add a number 5 to the agenda. Joel Schwartz is here from the BADC to talk about possibly changing the zone in Wilson park to match the rest of the zone. Under correspondence, Violette would like to add that he received a copy of East Montpelier Town's Plan.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

A motion to approve the December 20, 2017 meeting minutes by Clain, second by Pierce. Meeting minutes approved unanimously at 7:05pm, as corrected

PROPOSED BATTERY STORAGE PROJECT IN WILSON PARK:

Thomas Hirschfeld, Senior Director of Operations for Northern Power, is here to present the proposed battery storage project in Wilson Park. Northern Power currently sells wind turbines globally. Hirschfeld explained and discussed the battery storage. He states that they are using the land that is next to their current production facility in the Wilson Industrial Park. Hirschfeld states they have three potential investors, once they select an investor then they can proceed with permitting. He feels like solar, battery storage facilities are going to be the next big thing. Over the next few years the cost will reduce by 75% therefore making it more affordable for businesses. There will be someone in charge of discharging the energy stored in the batteries during the peak usage of the day. The batteries will charge at night and during off peak time. There will be cooling fans installed but the fans will run off the batteries. Hirschfeld stated that there will be 32-35 DPA noise coming from the fans and batteries but they are going to install a 8-10ft green fence with sound proofing to reduce the noise and not disrupt any house nearby. He goes on to state that the batteries will be built on a concrete pad and will take about 3 months to construct once they secure an investor. Hirschfeld doesn't expect the project to be completed until spring on 2019. It will cost about 11 million dollars total, 8 million of that will be in batteries. There are two different

battery technologies being used for the 5-megawatt facility, 2-megawatts of Vanadium flow batteries and 3-megawatts of Samsung lithium ion batteries.. Hirschfeld hopes this will create and/or help retain jobs in Barre Town as they grow and put these battery storage sites in different states. Hirschfeld states that the design, research, permitting, and engineering will all be done here, just like the wind turbines, which Northern Power is known for around the world.

MOTION:

No motion was made by The Planning Commission.

POSSIBLE ZONING AMENDMENT:

Joel Schwarts is here from Barre Area Development (BADC) to talk about changing the zoning of part of the Wilson Park. Schwarts states that there is 25.35 acres of land that is zoned office building retail, the rest of the park is zoned industrial. Schwarts feels that OBR does not fit that park and would like to change the OBR to industrial. Schwarts feels that if they get a potential buyer/renter of that land the potential buyer/renter will not want to wait or go through the process of an allowed use determination or a zone amendment. He feels this could mean a loss of a business and jobs for the Town. Schwarts feels it makes sense to change the zone to match the rest of the park. Schwarts feels that the Town wouldn't want a Home Depo or shopping center to go into that lot. Violette states that they did do a zoning amendment for New England Excess Exchange when they were thinking about coming to the park to allow their use in an industrial zone. Violette states that the problem he notices is that when you look at the allowed uses under OBR they are very specific, where industry is a little more open ended. Sanborn states that industry zone is in short supply and if we look through the Town we will find other OBR zoning. Violette states that most of the OBR is on the main throughway of the Town. Violette points out that the industrial park traffic is closely monitored by Act 250 right now. Schwarts states that the BADC has hired a marketing team to help promote Barre City and Barre Town. Clain questioned if the PC changed the zone would there be a protection from allowing solar to go in on that land. Schwarts states that the landowner (the Town) can put prohibition in the deed stating that a buyer can't allow solar. Violette states he would like to see a covenant added to future sales preventing solar farms, Sanborn agreed. Schwarts states that there are two different covenants. Pierce questions where the "old" and "new" park sections are? Violette showed her where the "old" and "new" parks are located. Sanborn states that if the zone is changed, the Select board will need to be willing to add the deed restrictions.

Violette explained the process of changing a zone.

Sanborn states the PC will put this on the agenda for next month and talk more about this.

MOTION:

No motion was made by The Planning Commission.

ENERGY PLAN:

The Planning Commission continued the discussion on the Energy Plan. Violette states that about a month ago Pierce and Clain came up to the office and reviewed some of Green Mountain Power's (GMP) map and solar installations. Last week Clain, Atwood, and Violette went to GMP to talk with them.

Atwood states he was thinking about the energy plan that the energy savings that could occur with the battery storage but based on what GMP told them there would not be any savings. The only way to get a savings would be reduce energy demand at peak times. Clain states there is a difference between reduce load and peak. Clain states there is no load growth. Atwood states that GMP doesn't see load growth where the Regional Planning Commission (RPC) sees the growth. Clain states that they want to promote using electricity, that the more it is used the cheaper it will be. GMP states they are upgrading their systems and states that Barre Town is a thorough source of alternative energy. Clain questions if they should concentrate on something like transportation rather than solar. Sanborn doesn't feel like we have control over it because of the Agency of Transpiration (AOT) and the State. Pierce states that if they ask the State or AOT to expand the bus route, the State tells the Town they need to pay for it. Violette states that it also depends on the demand and the Town just doesn't have a high demand for it. Atwood feels it is reasonable to ask GMP/WEC to see what they are going to do about line loss and see what they are going to do to help people decrease use in electricity.

The PC is going to keep working on the Energy Plan for next month.

MOTION:

No motion was made by The Planning Commission. The Planning Commission will continue to review the material that was provided by CVRPC and work on incorporating it into the Town Plan.

MISCELLANEOUS:

FOLLOW-UP:

CORRESPONDENCE:

Violette states the Planning Commission received an email with East Montpelier's Town Plan update. Violette states he can email copies of the plan to members if they would like to read it. East Montpelier will be holding a public hearing on the changes.

ROUND TABLE:

Violette will call Northern Power to see if they can set up a tour of the building for next month before the PC meeting.

ADJOURN:

A motion was made by George Clain, seconded by Byron Atwood, the Planning Commission voted unanimously to adjourn the meeting of February 21 2018 at 9:15pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Emily Marineau

Cedric Sanborn, Chair

Byron Atwood

Chris Violette

Charlie Thygesen Sr.

Claire Duke

George Clain

Debra Pierce

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