

# BARRE TOWN PLANNING COMMISSION MINUTES

The Town of Barre Planning Commission held its regular meeting on **Wednesday, December 16, 2015** beginning at **7:00** p.m. at the **Municipal Building**, Lower Websterville, to consider the following:

## **Members Present:**

Cedric Sanborn	Charlie Thygesen
Chris Violette	Debra Pierce
John Hameline	Claire Duke
George Clain	

## **Others Present:**

Jeff Blow	Jack Mitchell
Suzanne VanBusKirk	

## **Staff Present:**

### 1) **CHANGES TO THE AGENDA**

### 2) **APPROVAL OF MINUTES:**

*On a motion made by Thygesen, seconded by Pierce the Planning Commission voted to approve the minutes from November 18, 2015 with Clain abstaining.*

### 3) **WARNED PUBLIC HEARINGS (7:05 p.m.)**

None

### 4) **OTHER:**

- 1) Presentation by Suncommon of proposed 150Kw community solar project on Cummings Road.

Joel Rhodes (Suncommon) – 1-acre coverage, panels are 10’ tall with 4 rows. Still needs to obtain state permits. GMP is reaching their cap, which prompted SunCommon to file the certificate of public good first. This will be a community solar array. Residents of Barre will be able to sign up first.

Suzanne VanBusKirk (504 Cummings Rd) stated that she’ll be able to see this from her house and Cummings Rd is a small road and there is already an array on this road. When she steps out of her house, she’ll potentially have an array on each side of her.

Sanborn asked what changes she would like to see; more screening. VanBusKirk states that this is usable land, farming and wildlife.

Jeff Blow – asked how many members will own the array; 30-34. Rhodes stated you receive solar credit under your electric bill. It’s a \$1.00 down payment with a one-month payment with a fixed monthly payment. Membership is good for 20 years. Members can back out if they find buyers to take over their contract.

Clain asked for a membership packet; Rhodes stated he’ll send one.

Rhodes – Owner (Suncommon) of the array is responsible for decommissioning.

Blow asked about decommissioning – Rhodes stated he’s not that familiar with it, but the panels come off easily and the stakes are removed from the ground.

Blow asked who the owner of the array will be – Rhodes says Suncommon will own the array.

Duke asked Blow about the taxability of the solar panels – the legislature added a 70% discount, reducing the tax benefit to the Town; Rhodes was unfamiliar with the breakdown.

Clain asked Blow if people can go to the Board of Civil Authority to get a discount on her taxes due to ascetics; Jack Mitchell stated it would be unfair to give people looking at solar arrays a tax credit and not those looking at grout piles.

Blow asked VanBusKirk if she'd be in favor if she was to receive an energy credit from this project; she stated no, she'd rather look at the land than an array.

Clain asked Rhodes if Suncommon is considered a utility; he stated the utility is ultimately GMP.

Suncommon guarantees a 7% credit to its members.

Any damage to the array, Suncommon will fix.

Pierce asked about the deer wintering areas on the map.

Thygesen said that for 7% we can turn off our lights.

Duke asked about after the lease is up; Rhodes stated that the owner (Suncommon or another entity) of the array is responsible for the decommissioning. Thygesen asked about a fund or a bond to protect the land. Violette stated that there is a problem with the lack of information on decommissioning – it's a concern.

Violette asked what is inside the panels; Rhodes stated it's a silicon crystal based mineral that helps to break down the photons. Violette asked if they contain hazard waste; Rhodes stated these are panels from Kyrocera. At this time there isn't a take back program.

Violette asked how this array can share credits, yet the other large ones we've seen here in Town say that they can't provide individual local incentives to those affected by an array, State law will not allow...what is the difference.

Hameline stated there will be 780 modules; Rhodes stated yes and none have been sold except for the landowner.

Hameline asked who will maintain the property with the arrays; Rhodes stated they'll contract someone to mow.

Violette asked if they can be moved away from the road; Rhodes stated that it's dependent upon the wetland.

Sanborn stated they need to be pushed back as far as possible. Sanborn suggested a different configuration. Sanborn stated that the plantings need to double and something needs to be planted that grow taller, far more extensive planting along the front and taller.

Clain asked if there's going to be an expansion of this project; Rhodes stated he can't answer, but looking at the spot the array can't really be any bigger than 150kw.

VanBusKirk thanked the Board for listening to her, but wants to know what this meeting is for because no one is listening; Violette stated that she's right, but that she's still being heard and the Planning Commission can send letters expressing their desires to the PSB.

Violette suggests the Planning Commission write a letter with their requests.

1. Better screening
2. Setting the project back
3. Limit to 1 – 150KW on this property – no expansion
4. Decommissioning fund

2) Solar Siting Task Force meeting recap. (Chris Violette)

Violette stated he will not be at the next meeting.

5) **ZONING BYLAW AMENDMENT(S):**

Continue discussion regarding proposed zoning amendments – **no action taken**

6) **CORRESPONDENCE:**

7) **ROUND TABLE:**

8) **ADJOURN!**

*On a motion by Violette, seconded by Pierce, the Planning Commission voted unanimously to adjourn the meeting of December 16, 2015 at 9:02 p.m.*

Respectfully Submitted,

Heidi Bennett

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Cedric Sanborn, Chair

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John Hameline

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Charlie Thygesen Sr.

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George Clain

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Chris Violette

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Claire Duke

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Debra Pierce