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Town of Sharon, Vermont  
**Planning Commission**  
Minutes  
November 12, 2019 (Draft)

Commissioners present: Ira Clark, Paul Kristensen, Sue Sellew, Peter Anderson

Staff Present: Margy Becker, taking minutes

Visitors Present: Martha Saksus, Norwich Technologies; resident Steve Raymond

The meeting was called to order at 7:00PM by Ira Clark.

Election of Temporary Chair: Peter Anderson nominated Ira Clark as temporary chair; Paul Kristensen seconded. The motion carried.

Approval of Minutes of October 8, 2019: Sue Sellew made the motion to approve the minutes of October 8, 2019 as submitted. Paul Kristensen seconded. The motion carried.

Norwich Technologies (“NT”) – Raymond Road 500kW Solar Project: Martha Saksus, VP of Development, reported that since the Selectboard and NT had agreed to the final provisions for the decommissioning fund for the Rte. 132 solar installation, and dead vegetation at that site was replaced in July, NT is now interested in proceeding with developing the Raymond Road 500kW net-metered project. NT has an option to buy the property.

Ms. Saksus stated NT will start the application process for a certificate of public good (“CPG”) over again, though it is in no rush to do so. A 45-day notice of application will be issued at the appropriate time. She continues to work with the Gilberts (abutters) regarding screening. Ms. Saksus also noted screening from Rte. 132 as a public concern.

Martha Saksus asked for the Planning Commission’s general feedback concerning the project.

Sue Sellew indicated the SPC is trying to sit down with the Energy Committee to further discuss revisions to the energy chapter of the Town Plan. The status of ‘preferred sites’ mapping was discussed. Commissioners referred Ms. Saksus to TRORC staff for the most up-to-date map.

Paul Kristensen reported his concern that development of the Raymond Road solar array so close to the existing array on Rte. 132 may create the appearance of a ‘generating station’ and destroy the rural character of the area. Martha Saksus noted Steve Raymond’s concern about preserving the agricultural character of the area.

Martha Saksus asked if the SPC would issue a “preferred site letter” at this time? Sue Sellew and Ira Clark reiterated the SPC’s intent to finish amending town plan chapters, including

revisions to the energy chapter, before the Commission would consider issuing such a letter. Ira Clark indicated flexibility as to the order in which chapter revisions are undertaken. The town plan revision process may take one year. The SPC is awaiting receipt of a municipal planning grant to help fund technical assistance from the TRORC to prepare revisions.

Planning Commissioners further expressed their intent to solicit input from the townspeople on the town plan and about ‘preferred sites’ for energy facilities. Peter Anderson reported his view of the SPC’s mission is to generally identify ‘preferred sites’. It will be up to individual landowners as to whether they wish to have a solar facility on their property. Commissioners clarified they do not envision the SPC holding community meetings to specifically discuss the Raymond Road proposal. Ms. Saksus was invited to attend any of the public hearings or meetings on town plan and map revisions.

Commissioners expressed their intent to postpone further consideration of the Raymond Road solar installation until, at minimum, later in the winter or March 2020.

Sharon Town Plan Revisions: Sue Sellew spoke about the process the Town of Norwich used to solicit public input regarding town plan revisions. Norwich used the VT State Library Associations’ template for community discussions on ‘critical issues’. As part of its town plan revision process, Norwich Planning Commissioners read “Re-peopling Vermont”. Sharon’s Baxter Librarian has volunteered to make copies available to Sharon residents.

Maps – Appearance of ‘Preferred Sites’: Commissioners are not optimistic about the feasibility of color-coordinated ‘preferred sites’ maps for Royalton, Tunbridge, Strafford, and Sharon (“4-town planning communities”). Some towns have adopted zoning and others have not. Peter Anderson will follow-up with Pete Fellowes at TRORC.

Royalton Town Plan Revisions: Commissioners acknowledged receipt of the notice of the public hearing scheduled for December 3, 2019 at 7:00PM in the Academy Building in Royalton.

Regional Plan Hearing Oct. 31, 2019: Sue Sellew has noted the regional plan includes conflicting statements regarding increased demand for housing stock in Sharon at a time of purported population loss. Peter Anderson, as liaison to TRORC, will present this comment to TRORC staff.

Peter Anderson made the motion to RECESS the Planning Commission meeting at 8:17PM for consideration of DRB business. Paul Kristensen seconded and the motion carried.

Ira Clark RECONVENED the Planning Commission after the conclusion of DRB business (see separate minutes) at 8:41PM.

Administrative business: Peter Anderson and Sue Sellew reported on attendance at a recent workshop at which TRORC Senior Planner Kevin Geiger presented. Sue will forward the slide presentation. Commissioners noted the differences between “deliberative versus executive sessions” and the suggestion that testimonies at public hearings be ‘under oath’. This practice helps lessen the likelihood that interested abutters may appeal a decision. Commissioners

requested that the SPC subdivision review database be revised to include a field indicating that an audio recording of the public hearing is on file. Margy Becker will follow-up on this administrative matter.

Adjournment: Paul Kristensen made the motion to adjourn at 8:58PM. Sue Sellev seconded and the motion carried.

Submitted by,  
Margy Becker