

PLANNING BOARD - TOWN OF KNOX - ALBANY COUNTY

P.O. Box 56, Knox, N.Y. 12107

Established 1822

PLANNING BOARD MEETING MINUTES

Minutes: 10 November 2016

Present: Bob Price, Bob Gwin, Tom Wolfe, Debra Nelson, Brett Pulliam, Betty Ketcham

Meeting was called to order at 1932.

1. Minutes of the October 2016 meeting were reviewed and approved with one modification-updating the date in the header.
2. The Board revisited the topic of the Route 156 business district proposal. The Town Board asked the Planning Board for an official recommendation earlier in the year. Bob Gwin reviewed some of the points he made in the August 2016 meeting including the view that the business district decision should be guided and based on the wording of the Comprehensive Plan. The CAC also previously indicated that water and septic would be difficult at the proposed location.
 - a. Tom Wolfe spoke of community compatibility, addressing his long-standing position that Knox is suitable for budding entrepreneurs. Debra Nelson stated that it was not prudent or necessary to have a business district in a new location, as the Town already has a designated Business District and should focus its efforts there.

Debra Nelson made the following motion: whereas the town allows for home businesses throughout the Town and based on concerns expressed by the Board and CAC including safety, infrastructure, geology and lack of demand, we make a motion that we do not establish an additional business district at that this time. Instead, we should focus our efforts and continue to work with the Town Board and comprehensive planning process to explore potential business districts in the town. Brett Pulliam seconded the motion. There were 5 Yeas and 1 Nay from Tom Wolfe.

3. Jared Pantella and Steve Longway of Labella Associates, an engineering firm out of Rochester, NY, attended the meeting to discuss a proposal to build a 2MW solar array on a parcel of land on Route 156, $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile from the intersection of Route 156 and Old Stage Road. They presented on behalf of US Solutions d.b.a Community 2.0; Justin Beiter of Community 2.0 was also in attendance.
 - a. The proposed area is zoned residential and is owned by the Peter Young Center. The project would have 377 tables with 18 panels per table, covering approximately 15 acres. They are targeting Summer 2017 to be fully installed and running. Jared and Steve presented a site visual. The layout of the panels meets the required 50' setbacks around the parcel and 75' setback from Berne Altamont Road.
 - b. Father Peter Young spoke of his intention to restore the seminary building for the community; the building is located on the proposed project parcel. This project would allow for the building to stay open to the public.
 - c. This project was first proposed in Guilderland and did not get approval from their Board. Knox had been intended as a Phase II of the project but is now the sole phase.
 - d. The proposal includes clearing 12.5 acres of woods and 2.3 acres of meadow. Preliminary assessments have found pockets of wetlands but further investigation will need to be done.

- i. Labella Associates will report back on the estimated quantity and types of trees that will be cut down.
- e. The site would use a remote net-metered arrangement and power would be sold through Power Purchase Agreements that will be formalized after the site is approved. Deb Nelson expressed concern that no agreements for uptakers have been solidified. Mr. Pantella stated that they are targeting commercial off-takers for the power and conversations have begun with the University of Albany, SUNY Albany, Siena College and local manufacturing firms. He also alluded to one company that has expressed interest in being the sole uptaker and he will share the name of the company with the Board if and when an agreement is finalized.
- f. A preliminary CESIR study was conducted and the results came back favorable. Contact has also been made with National Grid regarding a connection to the 3-phase power line but they do not have a final approval from NG.
- g. The official submission to the Planning Board will need to include, among other information, an O&M plan with monthly operations for maintenance.
- h. Labella Associates is working with North Country Ecological on an environmental study. North Country may also be able to look at the forested area, overgrowth and impact on streams crossing through the proposed site.
 - i. Labella Associates stated there would be no treatment to the soil to keep the grass from growing.
- i. The Board noted that all neighbors must be notified by registered mail with receipts provided to the Planning Board prior to the Public Hearing when that time comes.
- j. The Decommissioning plan will need to include the projected cost of removal based on an estimate of the cost for labor and material at the time of decommissioning.
- k. The Board recommended that Labella Associates discuss with Town Board a PILOT (Payment In Lieu of Taxes) arrangement.
- l. The array will be fenced with an 8' security fence. The Board requested a V-shaped barbwire top. The array will have a maximum height of 12 ft. above ground level at the north edge of the panels.
- m. The Board requested a site visit to gain a better understanding of the visual aspects. Tom Wolfe offered to make arrangements with Father Young for a tour of the property.
- n. Betty Ketcham requested a GIS layout of the project.
- o. Labella Associates will summarize their next steps in an email to Bob Price.
- p. Comments from the audience:
 - i. Bill and Catherine Johnson, of 1093 Berne Altamont Road, are located across the road from the proposed site. They expressed visual impact concerns and urged the Planning Board to be mindful that Route 156 is the western gateway to the Hilltowns and a large part of the character of entry into the village of Altamont—in their opinion, a large, commercial operation would be out of place.
 - ii. Debra Breitenbach addressed the Board and stated that she knows the land very well. She expressed concerns about the footprint of the array and its impact on the old-growth forest and wildlife. She also noted that a creek cuts through the site with a deep ravine and there is an unmarked graveyard at the top of waterfall.
 1. The Board requested that the creek be added to the drawing.
 - iii. Marc Roman, of 1160 Berne Altamont Road, addressed the Board and expressed concerns about the lack of transparency to the community when this same project was proposed in Altamont some months back. In his opinion, the details of the Altamont project were not forthcoming; he was not aware of the proposal until he saw someone scouting the land near his property and he was not notified of the meetings in Guilderland to discuss the project. He urged the Board to insist of full transparency as a

respect to the community and the impacted residents. He also suggested that the Board review the paperwork from the Altamont proposal.

4. Darlene Odom Tice and Dennis Tice addressed the Board regarding a 50ft piece of property that was given to them by Mrs. Tice's father in 2001 and was never appropriately filed with the County. The Board agreed that this is a boundary line adjustment, as no new lots were created. The Board recommended that the Tice's file the amended deed and map with the County. Bob Price will send an email to indicate that they met with the Planning Board.
5. Dean Smith of Borrego emailed Bob Price requesting the Planning Board sign off on the drawing so that Dean can proceed with sending on to the financial backers of the project. As the Board is still waiting for Borrego to complete their visual impact assessment and Betty's requested updates to the maps, Bob will let them know that the Planning Board will conditionally sign the drawing.

Debra Nelson made a motion that the meeting be adjourned. Brett Pulliam seconded the motion. There were 6 Yea and 0 Nay.

Meeting adjourned at 2122. Next meeting - Thursday, 8 December 2016 @ 1930.