

PLANNING BOARD - TOWN OF KNOX - ALBANY COUNTY

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

Established 1822

PLANNING BOARD MEETING MINUTES

Minutes: 9 February 2017

Present: Bob Price, Bob Gwin, Tom Wolfe, Deb Nelson, Brett Pulliam, Betty Ketcham, Travis O'Donnell
Meeting was called to order at 1935.

1. Minutes from the January 2017 meeting were reviewed and approved with three modifications—change “have” to “had” in Section 4i, update final motion in Section 4 to read that Bob Price sent the memorandum to the Town Board and to include a copy of the memorandum as an addendum to the January 2016 minutes.

2. Community 2.0 Solar Project

- a. Jared Pantella and Steve Longway of Labella Associates provided a binder and set of maps to each Board member for review in the meeting.
- b. *Notice/Letters*
 - i. Letters explaining the solar initiative and corresponding maps were sent to neighboring properties on 2 February 2017. Addresses were obtained from the Albany GIS system. The Board will have a chance to review the letter receipts once received.
 - ii. A letter was sent to the Knox Fire Department on 1 February 2017 urging the Fire Department to let Labella know of any concerns. A set of keys to the property gate will be provided to the Knox Fire Department.
 - iii. Notification has been made to the Town of Guilderland and the business manager of the Guilderland School District because portions of the property are located within the district.
- c. *Updated Maps/Property Details*
 - i. Labella presented a series of updated maps. The array was reduced from 2.8 DC to 2.1 DC due to the wetlands and has been pushed back to the rear of the lot. The main access will be from Berne Altamont Road, weaving through the wetlands to a turnaround point indicated by a shaded area at the top of the map. The only planned earthwork will be the installation of the roadway. Sections of the guardrail on Berne Altamont Road will need to be removed and replaced during roadway installation. The permit application has been filed with the DOT and is currently under review.
 - ii. Labella presented computer generated visual assessment maps of six viewpoints of the array including neighboring houses and views from the Route 156 highway.
 - iii. There will be no grading in the area of the panels. The existing topography slopes to East/North and will maintain the same drainage pattern.
 - iv. The transformer and main switchgear pads will be located just inside the entrance to the property. All utilities will be underground until outside the fence line.
 - v. Community 2.0 will only be purchasing the property within Knox—the rest will remain with Vesta/Father Peter Young.

d. Fencing

- i. Per the Town's request, Labella will install a 6-ft fence with a Y-shaped barbwire top and swing-gate entrance. Travis O'Donnell expressed concerns with the punitive look of the fencing. He requested that Labella explore alternative fencing that would look more aesthetically pleasing.

e. Potential Customers

- i. Potential customers for the power include Saratoga Springs Golf Course, local universities, a printing company and a business owner of 15 complexes in Albany. No decision has been yet but Community 2.0 is confident that they will be able to sell all of the power.

f. Decommissioning Plan

- i. Labella discussed the plan including removal of the culvert pipes, electrical wiring being disconnected, capped and cut 1 ft. below grade and restoration of the area back to native conditions.
 - a. Labella's environmental group chose landscaping native to area comprised of 172 plants—a mix of trees and honeysuckle. Tom Wolfe did not express any concern with the restoration landscaping, stating that the area will replant itself.
- ii. The Board requested written documentation of the decommissioning plan including triggers and cost calculation.

g. Timing of Permits/Approvals

- i. Deb Nelson expressed concerns about allowing for tree clearing without necessary approvals and permits. She suggested possibly phasing construction or creating a more flexible timeline.
- ii. There was a general discussion about timing as it relates to the bat regulations.
 - a. Tom Wolfe indicated that there are guidelines for tree clearing for the Northern Long-Eared Bat and Labella may be able to work with the DEC for flexibility. The DEC will also be able to identify maternal roost trees.
- iii. The PPA Interconnection and Army Corps of Engineers applications are both pending. The project was originally approved for 4MWatt but with the adjustments, the solar array will only be rated at 2.1MWatt.

Questions from the Audience

1. Joseph Breitenbach, who resides on the eastern side of the property off of Route 146, and whose property is contiguous to the eastern edge of the Vesta property, expressed the following concerns:
 - a. The array will be viewable from the Escarpment Trail.
 - b. The chemicals in the transformers and equipment may seep through the ground and end up in his well.
 - i. Labella clarified that there is nothing harmful in the inverters or the panels and that based on the technology and materials, there are no environmental pollution hazards. The only potential chemical would be in the utility transformer located on Route 156.
 - ii. The Board requested a written statement related to the environmental impact.
 - c. His property has an easement providing access to the Schoharie Plank Road, which he pointed out on the map, would be within the confines of the proposed fencing.

