

PLANNING BOARD - TOWN OF KNOX - ALBANY COUNTY

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

Established 1822

PLANNING BOARD MEETING MINUTES

Minutes: 13 April 2017

Present: Bob Price, Bob Gwin, Tom Wolfe, Brett Pulliam, Betty Ketcham, Travis O'Donnell

Meeting was called to order at 1930.

1. Minutes from the March 2017 meeting were reviewed and approved with no modifications.
2. David Gillenwaters addressed the Board regarding a planned subdivision of two parcels of his property on Knox Cave Road near Wilty Road. The Board agreed that this is a minor subdivision. They accepted Mr. Gillenwaters' map as a sketch plan and set a public hearing for May 11th. Mr. Gillenwaters was advised to notify all neighbors by registered letter with return receipt.
3. **Community 2.0:** Jared Pantella, Project Engineer for Labella Associates and Justin Beiter of Community 2.0 attended the meeting, prepared to discuss the solar array project with the public.
 - a. Jared Pantella reported a 40% failure rate when notices were sent last month due to changes in property ownership after Albany County's June 1 submission deadline. Names and addresses were sourced from the Albany County GIS system. Typically, tax collectors update changes in property ownership in May and send off to Albany County for June 1. Any updates after June would not be updated at the County level until the following year. Certified letters, required by the Zoning Ordinance, need to be sent to all property owners within a ½ mile of the project site. They need to be signed for by the person to whom the letter is addressed; 40% of the letters sent by Labella were incorrectly addressed and thus, were not successfully delivered and no signature was collected.
 - i. Multiple members of the audience reported not having received a notice.
 - a. Kevin Hale of 1263 Berne Altamont Road
 - b. Rob and Carly Digeser of 1264 Berne Altamont Road
 - b. The Planning Board discussed alternate means of determining current resident including contacting the local postmasters, tax collector, having the applicant go "door-to-door", or a combination of these methods. Tom Wolfe stated that it would be unreasonable to ask an applicant to go door-to-door when they have done their due diligence following the current and existing process.
 - i. Jared Pantella indicated he would be willing to go door-to-door; however, this method does not guarantee a signature.

- ii. He requested that members of the audience that did not receive a notice and lived within a ½ mile of the project site record their names and addresses on a sign-up sheet so that he can mail them notices.
- c. Due to the fact that a significant portion of impacted land owners have not been properly notified, the planned public hearing will be delayed until May 11th so that notices can be re-sent to appropriate owners. The Planning Board advised Labella to review the rejected notices and determine the current property owner.
- d. The Planning Board opened the discussion to the public, framing the meeting as an informational session since the public hearing would not be held. Jared Pantella provided a brief overview of the project for the audience.
 - i. An audience member asked why Community 2.0 chose the area, who benefits from the project and how much compensation Peter Young will make off the project.
 - a. Bob Price provided a brief overview of the history of the project including their original request to have a project site in Altamont that was ultimately withdrawn.
 - b. Saratoga Springs Golf Course expressed interest in purchasing the power but no contract has been officially signed yet.
 - c. Vesta will sell the land to Community 2.0 for a premium price so Father Young will benefit from the sale of the property.
 - i. An audience member asked if the project would provide power to the local community.
 - a. No, not directly. A meter on the site property will indicate power generated from the solar array. As the purchaser of the power, Saratoga Golf Course will get a credit for the power generated in Knox. Knox residents' electric bills will not change or be lowered by the generated power.
 - i. An audience member asked if the project would generate tax money for the town.
 - a. Bob Price explained the concept of a PILOT (Payment in Lieu of Taxes) that is settled between the applicant and the Town of Knox. Each array will generate a small amount of money for the town and school district, through both the application fee and PILOT.
 - i. Joe Breitenbach asked if the Town would reduce taxes for loss of property value due to the project.
 - a. Vas Lefkaditis, Town Supervisor, stated that residents have a right to grieve taxes if they feel that their property value has dropped due to solar array.
 - i. Carly Digeser of 1264 Berne Altamont Road invited Labella to come to her house to survey the visual impact. She also stated that she has a baby and the noise from construction will impact her and her child's life at home. She stated that it was "bizarre" that the property owners that are most impacted did not receive a notice. Justin Beiter offered to visit their property during the first week of May to discuss options for decreasing their visual impact including the planting of more mature trees.

- ii. Joe Breitenbach expressed concern that the removal of vegetation on 20 acres will impact wildlife including game trails. He stated that he felt that the project would move forward as he had heard it was a “done deal” and that the Planning Board was ignoring zoning by placing an industrial complex in a residential area.
 - i. The Planning Board assured Mr. Breitenbach that no final decisions have been made or will be made until the public hearing in May.
- iii. Ken Saddlemire of Becker Road asked for the approximate height and size of the solar panels.
 - i. Each table is 30’ x 12’ and 1.5-7ft off the ground when tilted at 20 degrees.
- iv. An audience member asked about how much traffic the project would generate.
 - i. Most of the traffic will occur during the earth-moving phase of the project. Fill is required to create the access road and is slated to take one month to complete. Construction cannot begin until November due to regulations involving the local bat population and will take 3-6 months to complete. After the project is completed, traffic to the site will be minimal as operation and maintenance will occur only once a month.
- v. An audience member asked how far apart the tables stand.
 - i. Solar tables are 8” apart within the row with 10’ of space between rows for maintenance needs and to account for the shadowing of the angled tables.
- vi. An audience member asked if panels move on own to locate the sun.
 - i. No, the panels are static and do not move.
- vii. Kevin Hale of 1263 Berne Altamont Road requested that Labela create a visual from higher than a street view since their property is at a higher elevation and will be looking down on the array.
- viii. Lisa Cowan of 1215 Berne Altamont Road also expressed concerns about the visual impact from her property, which is also at a higher elevation.
- ix. Bill Johnson of 1093 Berne Altamont Road stated that he has been present at the last few meetings regarding this project in order to gather information. The original Altamont proposal was directly across the street from his property. He noted his perceived pitfalls of the potential site including it being fully wooded with steep grades, wetlands, protected bats, a right of way for a historic road, a direction of slope that isn’t south facing and a surrounding of neighbors not adequately notified. He urged the Planning Board to weigh these factors and reject the applicant.
 - i. Bob Price addressed Mr. Johnson’s comment about the historic road. Based on his research, what has been referred to in earlier meetings as the Schoharie Plank Road is actually the Palatine Road. The Schoharie Plank Road was not incorporated until 1848 and was shut down in 1856. The Palatine road was part of huge parcel of land and when it was sold, the owner reserved the right to use the Palatine road. The Breitenbach’s have been using the

- road since their father purchased the land. Labella has adjusted the project location so it will not impact the Palatine road and are in agreement with the Town that the road will not be disturbed.
- x. An audience member thanked Labella for their presentation and recommended opening the next public hearing with a brief informational review.

Bob Price will send necessary notification to the appropriate outlets for the public hearing for May 11th. He invited any residents in the audience to call him with questions and provided his phone number.

Brett Pulliam made a motion that the meeting be adjourned. Tom Wolfe seconded the motion. There were 6 Yea: Bob Price, Tom Wolfe, Brett Pulliam, Betty Ketcham, Travis O'Donnell, Bob Gwin and 0 Nay

Meeting adjourned at 2145. Next meeting - Thursday, 11 May 2017 @ 1930.