



Town of Knox Planning Board

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Minutes: October 15, 2020

Present: Ed Ackroyd, Todd LaGrange, Betty Ketcham, Deb Nelson, Tom Wolfe, Bill Pasquini

Absent: Kurt Johnson

Meeting called to order at 7:00pm via Google meet at the Knox Town Hall.

Review of September minutes

Tom made a motion to approve the minutes, Ed seconded it, all in favor.

Matt Fagan Subdivision

Joe Hammond from The Great Outdoors Land Surveying Company attended the meeting to present the Matt Fagan subdivision.

The proposed subdivision needs the approval of the Planning Board due to the fact that they will be subdividing one tax parcel and adding to that subdivided lot with an annexed piece of property afterwards. The end result will be 3 parcels of land.

A draft deed was written to show the Planning Board members what will be done in order to not leave any undersized lots after the subdivision and merger.

Tom made a motion that this was an allowable subdivision via 2, 1-cuts plus a merger of land so that there are no undersized lots. Ed seconded it, all in favor.

Solar Array Project – RIC Energy

John Reagan was present at the meeting to discuss the proposed Solar Array project on 1688 Thompson Lake Rd. Associates Jon Rappe and Andrew Reilly were also present via Google meet.

The plot of land where the Large Scale Solar Array is proposed to be built on is just shy of 33 acres.

NY State Department of Conservation gave the “ok” for wildlife. They are in the process of scheduling a meeting with the Army Corps of Engineers to determine wetlands.

In September it was asked that Planning Board members submit concerns to be addressed at October’s meeting. Current concerns include:

1. Existing wetlands in the northwest corner of the site will be preserved and protected. That condition is important in that it will provide a vegetative buffer to the road and neighbor and retain existing drainage on the site.
2. Any approval on the site should be contingent on the jurisdictional determination (JD) of the US Army Corps of Engineers.
3. The ditch in the southeast corner of the site is an intermittent stream that provides drainage on the site. This area should be protected to retain the drainage on the site. As such, it may be necessary to reduce the footprint in that corner of the site by slightly reducing the number of arrays in that area.
4. Tree clearing should be restricted to the period between November and March to reduce impact to bat habitat. The Knox Solar Estimated Construction Schedule should reflect that commitment.
5. Please provide specifics for the landscape buffer to be planted along Thompson Lake Road. Please include height, species, and plan for maintenance and guarantee period of establishment for coniferous and deciduous trees and shrubs.
6. Consider reducing the area of tree removal on the east side of the site to allow for more trees to be retained while not shading arrays.
7. Please develop a plan to provide meadow/wildflower/milkweed habitat to support pollinators in suitable areas. For instance, at a minimum, it would be desirable to have the buffer areas and the northern areas be planted with a wildflower mix that includes milkweed and a mowing plan to mow only outside the monarch migration timeframe (i.e, after October 1).
8. SHPO Guidelines for Solar Facility Development Cultural Resources Survey Work calls for complete GIS analysis for visual impact and a survey of all properties 50 years or older within ½ mile of the solar array Zone of Visual Impact (ZVI). What is the status of the assessment?
9. Please retain the vegetation in the wetland areas and outside of the perimeter fence to the maximum extent possible. Consider a narrower mowed buffer on the east side of the project.
10. The site plan should clearly depict the location and type of plantings to provide year round visual screening as visual buffer to the neighboring properties.
11. The chain link fence should be black or a color to reduce visual impact.
12. The plans call for equipment to be cleaned to minimize dirt on the paved surfaces upon the site. It would also be desirable to wash equipment as it enters the site if equipment is taken to the other sites/staging areas to reduce the introduction of invasive plant and species onto the site.
13. Access road will be adequate to carry large vehicles and fire trucks if needed.

14. A plan constructed to guarantee a time frame of replacing trees/shrubs if something dies.

RIC Energy associates will take a closer look at the wetlands, the drainage and the buffer to make sure specific areas will not be impacted by the Solar Array project. They will also take into consideration the mix of trees and shrubs that will be planted and make sure that the species planted are specific to the area they will be planted in as well as making sure there are enough planted to create a vegetation buffer that will be visually appealing. Equipment will be washed prior to entering the site and when exiting. There are protocols in place for these types of things and they will propose a condition to comply with this. The access road was reviewed with Knox Fire Chief Bill and was deemed adequate to carry and hold the weight of fire trucks. All concerns will be fully addressed prior to a public hearing with solutions to these concerns.

Deb provided resources for making areas more pollenating friendly for wildflower/milkweed mix. Tom to send John Reagan the information for review.

Concerns from the audience members via google meet:

Al Gaige (his property borders the Proposed Solar Array) spoke regarding his concerns about having a visual impact since the back of his house faces the project area. RIC Energy is willing to take photos with the “ok” from the property owner to get a visual of the visual impact of the project. This is “ok” with Al Gaige and Tom to give John Reagan Al’s information so they can coordinate a time to do this.

Vern Chapman (property will be affected by the proposed Solar Array) spoke regarding concerns of water drainage and erosion.

RIC commented regarding concerns of water drainage and erosion stating they will not be building onto the portion discussed due to it being wetlands. They will also have set in place a storm/water pollution prevention plan for the project area. Controls for these concerns are set in place during the construction phase.

Linda Novello (property will be affected by the Solar Array project) also has concerns about drainage since it currently is a problem for that area. Wants this to be investigated thoroughly to make sure it will not cause any further drainage or erosion problems. There is also a concern regarding traffic in that area with large vehicles and possible accidents that may occur on Thompson Lake Road.

RIC Energy reassured the audience that here has been proper investigation done to ensure there will be proper drainage in place and advised that there will not be a lot of traffic in and out of the project area during time of construction or afterwards.

Two weeks prior to the next meeting they will have the requirements made at tonight’s meeting for the vegetation/buffer to share with the Planning Board members.

Tom made a motion to hold a public hearing at next month's meeting at the Knox fire House at 7pm, Ed seconded it, all in favor.

156/157 MRD

A question as to why the 156/157 MRD was being discussed again after two different votes were made against the proposed Zoning change:

The amendment was referred to the Knox Planning Board by the Knox Town Board along with the new recommendation of the Albany County Planning Board Article VII Section 70 B of the zoning law states that every proposed amendment to the zoning law not initiated by the Planning Board shall be referred to the Planning Board for its recommendation.

Tom made a motion to recommend the approval of the Town Board's recommendation to amend the Town Zoning Ordinance to rezone the area of 156/157, currently zoned Residential and Agricultural as Multi Use Residential, Ed seconded it.

Tom: Yes
Ed: Yes
Bill: Yes
Betty: No
Deb: Present
Todd: Yes

Tom to give recommendation and vote to the Knox Town Board.

Update for members:

It was discussed at the Town Board meeting about a stipend for Planning Board members and Zoning Board members as well as a change of pay for both recording secretaries. A final decision has not been made yet though.

Deb made a motion to adjourn, Tom seconded it, all in favor.

Meeting adjourned at 8:30pm.

Next meeting to be held on November 12, 2020 at 7pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Knox Planning Board Secretary
Tiffany Snyder