



Town of Knox Planning Board

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Minutes: March 9 2023

Present: Ed Ackroyd, Todd LaGrange, Betty Ketcham, Deb Nelson, Tom Wolfe, Bill Pasquini and Deidre Keating.

Absent: Kurt Johnson

Meeting called to order at 7:30pm

Tom made a motion that Deidre serve as the alternate Planning Board member for this meeting, all in favor.

Minutes for February 2023 meeting reviewed.

Deidre made a motion to approve, Tom second, all in favor.

RIC Presenting Solar Array Project on Thompsons Lake Road

Nancy, the Project manager of the project for RIC presented on updates/changes since the prior proposed project. Kevin Bliss and Shawn Fresco from RIC present as well as Nick from Wendell Engineering.

Some concerns needing to be addressed in the new project was glare, National Grid and capacity for energy, the Gaige property, noise from transformer, visibility from Thatcher Park and tree clearing.

In regards to glare with the new tilting panels, the Planning Board requests a study of the surrounding area and how it may effect surrounding neighbors.

In regards to National Grid, a new CISAR study conducted shows an adequate capacity for the power that will be produced.

In regards to the Gaige property and the concerns for the health and well being of his family, Diedre suggested that Al Gaige possibly meet with Mr.Hackett from Capital District Center for

Independent Living to discuss the needs of the Gaige's daughter. This could give a better insight on what RIC would need to do in order to ensure that her health and well-being would be included in the construction of the solar array.

In regards to the noise from the transformers, per RIC the decibels are extremely low and would not disturb surrounding neighbors.

The mapping of Thatcher Park and where the project is located was reviewed by the Planning Board members. This was an original concern the Albany County Planning Board had and was one of the reasons it was denied. Continues to be a concern even with the distance between the two were reviewed.

The tree clearing will only be permitted and completed during certain times of the year that will not disturb the bats located in the project area.

To note, the land that RIC Solar Array will be on is being leased from the current property owner. When a new date is selected for a walk thru of the proposed project area (when no snow) a waiver is requested to be signed by the current property owner.

Kevin Bliss reviewed the SEQRA process in regards to the new proposed project. He gave the legal explanation (coming from RIC lawyer) as to why re-opening SEQRA was unnecessary. The Planning Board acknowledges that they are not re-opening SEQRA but to make it clear there is further action to be taken by the Knox Planning Board to ensure that all the concerns and changes to be made are completed.

The floor was opened to public comment:

Linda and Peter Novello who live across from the project were present. Linda read a letter to RIC and the Planning Board members of concerns she had with the project. (attached below)

Mr. Thomas Wolfe
Knox Planning Board Chairman

Dear Mr. Wolfe,

RE: Knox Solar Facility at 1688 Thompsons Lake Road East Berne, NY

To refresh your memory, my name is Linda Novello and my husband, Peter, and I live directly across the street at 1697 Thompsons Lake Road, from the proposed Solar Facility. If the project was good enough in 2020 from RIC, why is it now they have all these new revisions? We had concerns when they attempted to put in the facility back in 2020 and we still have those concerns plus more.

I am not sure if at this meeting tonight, it is open to the public to speak?
If it is, I would like the opportunity to speak of a few of my concerns.

Concern 1

This is my concern on how it is going to affect my farming business and me.

I do farming on my 15-acre land which every bit of the land counts. For example in my front fields, which will be across from the proposed driveway, I raise and rotate pasture chickens, turkeys, sheep and cows. The noise is going to affect not only my quality of life and me; it also affects my animals and my way of living. We have been here almost 50 years and farmed it the same way. **I am not listed on RIC's Agricultural Data Statement, Attachment 6.2 that they sent you. My farm number is NY86203 for my sheep ear tags.**

Concern 2

Drainage issue. They state that they are going to put in a catch basin. The water is still going to drain into my property no matter what they do. This does not help. Plus they are not going to do anything regarding the existing wetland problems that drain under the road into the Chapman pond and then into my property, so this is going to be additional drainage on my property, which I do not need. The problem is ENCON, the town, Viscio and Chapman all know the violations and everyone blames the other and nobody does the right thing to correct the problem. We feel it is all to do with political affiliations. When the beaver dam gets too high, the town comes with a backhoe, busts open the dam causing tremendous amounts of water to flood me, instead of opening it a little so the pressure isn't so extreme causing me flooding and all debris coming into my property. If this continues, I am going to make it public what the town is doing and file a lawsuit against all concerned. I addressed this concern with the representatives for the solar project then and again yesterday and they do not care. They are buying the land and have no concern for the environment.

Concern 3

Toxins. I have been researching solar panels and find out most are made in China with no regulations to the material used. Do we know what these solar panels are made of and where they are made? Do they contain toxic material that will leak into the earth and then possibly into the water table?

Concern 4

If this does go through, there will be 3 solar panel facilities in a mile radius.

This is going to affect my property value and will only make money for

Viscio, the town and RIC and the people are the ones that will suffer the consequences.

Concern 5

Why do they say after 30 years they will dismantle the site and they leave? Why do they leave, is it contaminated at that point and we are stuck with it? Do they still own the property? Will they be held accountable for it? What do they plan on doing with it? We are the people and we are the ones that will be suffering. I am sure the people agree we do not need another Love Canal!

My suggestion is, before anything further is approved, have a meeting with all the town people to discuss where in the town it would be appropriate for this and other similar facilities to be built. This way you can map it all out and know where it can be done without affecting anyone. I feel this would be the honest way to do it.

I would like to thank the people on the Planning Board who voted it down the last time and I would like to thank them and hope they still feel the same way about this.

If there are any questions feel free to call or email me at lnovello15@gmail.com.

Thank you again,
Linda & Peter Novello
1697 Thompsons Lake Road
East Berne, NY 12059
(518) 872-1206

Gary Bunzey was present appreciative that the Planning Board has requested a glare report which is a concern for him.

Vera Chapman present and stated she shares the same concerns as the Novello's.

Al Gaige present and voiced his continued concerns for his daughter's well-being during and after construction of the project. He is also concerned about property values and would like research from RIC regarding this.

Next meeting on April 13 will be discussing what RIC is doing to address all of the current concerns and this will determine if the proposed project can move forward to a Public Hearing. Once a public hearing is completed, it will be then passed along to Albany County Planning Board for their approval.

Conservation Advisory Council Presentation

Some of the members of this organization presented information regarding what they do for the town. Information regarding the council and the members are located on the Knox town website. The mission of the Conservation Advisory Council of the Town of Knox is to provide information, expertise, advisement and guidance to the Town of Knox Board on matters pertaining to the protection, conservation, preservation, restoration and enhancement of natural and cultural resources within the town.

Deb made a motion at 9:45pm to adjourn, Bill second it, all in favor.

Meeting concluded at 9:45pm

Next meeting to be held April 13 at 7:30pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Tiffany Snyder Knox Town Secretary