

Marshfield Planning Commission Meeting Minutes

7:00 p.m. • Thursday, November 15, 2012 • Old School House Common

Members present: Jon Groveman, Rich Baker, Julie Medose, Michael Schumacher, and Bob Light. Member absent: Faeterri Silver. Guest present: Rich Phillips. Also present: Barbara Burkhalter, recording secretary.

Jon called the meeting to order at 7:04 p.m. The members reviewed and approved the minutes of meeting dated October 18, 2012.

1. Solar Array Project at the Old Schoolhouse Common

Rich Phillips came to talk about the solar project at the Old Schoolhouse Common (OSC) and handed out a print-out about the project (more details can be found on the town's website). The Selectboard (SB) and Energy Committee have endorsed this project. He needs a letter signed by the PC saying the project is okay, before the Public Service Board (PSB) will give the go-ahead for the installation to begin. An installer has been hired, they have all the materials and the project can be completed within eight days after they receive the go-ahead from the PSB; the project must be completed before February 19, 2013, but they would like to have it completed before Christmas.

The three solar trackers will be post-mounted on the low side of the hill (optimal location as there is no shadowing at this site), will rotate with the sun and tilt with the seasons.

Comments:

- Town will own them and the components are covered by warranties
- Concern about vandalism: it was suggested that perhaps a fence be built and motion detector lights put up. Mr. Phillips stated that they are sturdily constructed and can withstand up to 1" hailstone at 50 mph. The town has a rider in its insurance policy regarding vandalism.
- There was a special meeting held on October 23rd and about 65 people attended. Neighbors were asked if they would require screening be planted, but they didn't seem to want it. The people were asked if there were any objections and nobody seemed to be against it.
- A concern was raised about this project not being in keeping with the PC's goals to protect rural character. The proposed site on town grounds is highly visible. In response to this it was stated that the Town Plan treats energy projects differently.
- It was stated that the town owns several large roofs (Town Garage, OSC, Fire Station) and why wasn't a roof mounted solar array proposed? There must be ways for the project to be completed that could minimize its visual affect. It was then stated that the slope of the OSC roof is not great and would only get 2/3rd the capacity of the proposed site, there is no room on Town Garage roof and there is too much shading by trees (the solar arrays need a wide open, unshaded area). Could there be a review of the possible locations? It would be good to get site analyses of less visible areas.
- The panels will be about 10'-11' tall when tilted all the way up. The PC may suggest the SB have screening planted (maybe a line of trees along the top of the bank).
- There are solar arrays already on private property in Marshfield (Eaton Cemetery Road, Fritz property)
- Regarding the letter required by the PSB: why is a letter required? The PC has never been consulted to comment on any of these projects before nor have they had to sign a letter concerning them. The PSB's standard process is to notify and get letters from the SB, PC and abutters.
- It was stated that the town needs to do a better job notifying the townspeople about these kinds of projects and the PC should have been included in planning of the location of it. It is difficult to get people involved, but also noted that there have been several articles about this project in the Field Notes (which every household in Marshfield receives) and been discussed on the Front Porch Forum.
- It was stated that this alternative power project is very cutting-edge and progressive, and it may help in drawing more people to the town; it also sets an example and promotes other people in town to do similar projects.

- The Marshfield Energy Conservation and Climate Change Committee are also pushing for group solar projects, weatherization, and PACE financing (where qualifying individuals may borrow from a fund and pay it back as part of their tax bill) for these sorts of projects.

Bob, Rich Baker, Julie, and Jon voted to sign; Michael voted no. Jon signed the letter on behalf of the PC.

2. Regional Planning Commission Report

Michael attended the November 13th meeting. Waitsfield's Town Plan was reviewed, voted on and passed. An interesting point was that the Town of Waitsfield has outlawed any major solar projects.

FEMA has funded a study of roads because of the erosion issues last year; it's a sophisticated study (with detailed layered maps) of areas most susceptible to erosion and flooding. FEMA will be working with the towns and submitting a detailed report with tips and suggestions. These reports will be giving the Road Commissioners valuable information. They have already covered the Mad River area, Middlesex and Plainfield. Michael requested that when they get to Marshfield that they look at and highlight potential flash-flood areas.

3. Zoning Administrator's Report

None.

4. Review and discuss revisions to subdivision regulations

Julie prepared the PC section for the Town Report; this will be reviewed and discussed at the next meeting.

Jon will contact Jackie Cassino, a regional planner for the CVRPC, and see when she is available to come to a meeting to discuss the Enhanced Consultation.

The next meeting is December 6th.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:58 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Barbara S. Burkhalter

Final Approved
December 6, 2012