December 20, 2016 Planning Board Meeting Minutes

Minutes of the Planning Board Meeting held by the Town of LaFayette Planning Board December 20, 2016, in the Meeting Room of the LaFayette Commons Office Building at 2577 Route 11 in the Town of LaFayette at 7:00 PM.

Present: Jim Nakas Chairman

Brad Bush, Member

Shawn Adam, Member

Barb Lasky, Member

Rick Markoff, Member

Secretary: Jackie Bush Roorda

Attorney: John Langey

Others present: John Beardslee, Applicant

Paul Dwyer, Holly & Mike Schadt, Patti Sofranko, Residents

Kristy French, Jeff Booher, Bob Storrier, Residents

Chairman Nakas opened the Meeting at 7:00 p.m. and welcomed everyone. He then asked if anyone had any comments regarding the minutes of the November 15, 2016 meeting minutes. None were voiced.

**Member Bush moved and Adam seconded the motion to accept the minutes of the November 15th, 2016 Planning Board Meeting as submitted by Planning Board Secretary, Jackie Bush Roorda. Motion carried 5 – 0.**

Chairman Nakas read the agenda below and requested the applicant to come before the Planning Board to explain the intentions.

Case 1)

PUBLIC HEARING

John Beardslee’s request to overturn Resolution titled, Re-Subdivision of Lot # 1 of Ball Subdivision into Ball Subdivision #2 a/k/a “Beardslee Subdivision” allowing access from Sentinel Heights Road in order to sell property for a building lot.

Tax Map Number 022.-05-12.1

John Beardslee handed out a map done by Surveyor, Hans Christopherson to the Planning Board Members and any others in attendance displaying his intentions. He gave a brief summary explaining his desire to subdivide the property into two parcels and is hoping the Board overturns the 2005 subdivision in order to allow access from Sentinel Heights Road.

Chair Nakas then opened the Public Hearing and Attorney Langey explained the access from Sentinel Heights Road condition put on by the Onondaga County Planning Board in the 2005 prior subdivision would need to be removed in order to have this become a building lot allowing access from Sentinel Heights Road. Langey also advised that the other item of concern is the road frontage of 25’ needs the Zoning Board to approve a variance of 35’ in order to equal the 60 foot requirement and that this will also need to go to the Onondaga County Planning Board as it is on a County Road.

Mr. Beardslee advised that when Hans Christopherson was drawing up the map, he advised that with the 30 mph speed zone, the driveway site lines look very acceptable as there is good clearance from both directions. Langey suggested getting a letter from NYS Dept. of Transportation regarding driveway approval.

Questions asked by those in attendance and answered by John Beardslee and Paul Dwyer.

Q: Is your intention to build just one house on the subdivided lot, or more?

A: Only one house, approximately a 2,600 square foot ranch style home that would be straight in at the southern end of the property and there are no plans for anymore development.

Q: How far in do you plan on building the house?

A. Not very far in, just slightly north, however that can be adjusted if anyone has any concerns of the location of the house.

Member Bush commented that he believed the County’s concern was they did not want a road and several lots coming off Sentinel Heights.

Attorney Langey advised that Onondaga County Planning Board most likely will get a negative response to this and that a super majority vote of the LaFayette Planning Board will be necessary to over-ride the Onondaga County Planning Board. He added that the Public Hearing can remain open for the time being.

Jim Nakas advised that the Public Hearing would remain open and continue after the applicant meets with the Zoning Board of Appeals for their opinion and more information is available.

Mr. Beardslee thanked the Planning Board and those in attendance.

2nd Item) Informational Presentation/Solar Farm

Don Compitello, a representative Cypress Creek Renewables who is also involved in the application of Carley Farms Solar LLC, and Dimon Solar LLCs; appeared before the Board and explained that although the information packets had been delayed, he wished to do an informal presentation to the Board regarding the possibility of Carley Solar Farm on Apulia Road in the Town of LaFayette.

Attorney Langey advised Mr. Compitello that the Town Board has already passed a six month moratorium and formed a committee to look at the various laws regarding solar power, to include present and future applications.

Mr. Compitello advised that he is interested in explaining more about his company and answering any questions. He told those in attendance that Cypress Creek Renewables was established in 2003, is the largest solar company in the United States and are in 24 states. He explained that several towns are at different stages regarding solar farms.

Discussions included: the current Cicero Solar Project that is underway by Cypress Creek & benefits to the Town of Cicero; Efficiency of solar power; State and National Policies; lasting impact of solar power; a 20 acre solar farm produce 2 megawatts powering 500-600 homes; size of commercial panels 5’ x 3’ which weigh about 40 – 45 lbs. ; optimal site for solar farms is flat, dry, easy access & close to a substation and electric distribution utility line; working with local utility company under inter-connection agreement; Governmental tax 3 year offset (kind of Grant) , site plans are done by engineers and solar farms are built to New York State Building and Electric Code meeting Federal and State Standards with land use approval; it takes 2 – 3 months to build the site, all wiring is underground; after construction the solar farm is tested for 2 months to make sure everything is safe and the power is going correctly to the grid.

Questions asked by some in attendance:

Q: Are there any health risks with solar?

A: There are no health risks from the developments – they use all non-toxic panels and have no emissions. They are power stations, and like all utility infrastructure, they should not be entered except by professionals.

Q: Don’t the panels have copper selenium and what if they break and get in the soil?

A: No, there is no selenium; they are made of non-toxic materials and are made from aluminum, silicone and glass, with electrical connection wiring.

Q: What about radiation?

A: Photovoltaic solar farms emit low levels of Electro-magnetic frequencies that move through space, similar to FM and AM radio waves, and Cellular networks that power cell phones and wireless devices. The EMFs from solar farms are equal to or lower than the EMFs that currently run through the local grid of power lines on our streets and that connect to homes and businesses.

Q: How long do the panels last?

A: Approximately 30 years. Cypress Creek Renewables has a 25 year manufacturer warranty on all panels used, and expects them to last 25 – 40 years.

Q: Will there be a lot of noise from a solar farm? Will the EMFs create noise?

A: The only noise will be during the day as the inverter turns on after the panels produce power. There is a fan inside the inverter which makes about 52 decibels of sound. The inverter is located in the middle of the site and the sound from the fan dissipates inside of the solar farm. Electronic magnetic frequencies ae not sound waves and do not create noise.

Q: What about when you are done with the solar farm site in 30 years, what happens with decommissioning the site?

A: Typically the salvage, aftermarket and recycling value of the panels, the steel racking systems, and other equipment is higher than the cost of decommissioning. All materials on site can be recycled, reused or resold. Decommissioning is a requirement of CCR in the land lease – the lease states that the land is brought back to the previous condition, if decommissioning occurs.

Q: Are you proposing the sale of power as commercial or for residential?

A: The sale of power from the solar farms will be sold through the Community Distributed Generation program, to residential, business and other customers who receive electric bills through the local utility. A 20 acre/2 megawatt solar farm can power roughly 500-600 homes and businesses. Customers can sign up on the website for the Cicero Solar Farm and get a quote today, and lock in the price. The rate should be 5 – 8% cheaper than the rate they are paying now.

Q: What restricts you to 2 megawatt farms?

A: There are a few factors. State Regulations, the State Community Distributed Generation Program, currently available technology and local land use laws are all constraints. Solar is cheaper than other forms of power and the most reliable. It is possible to build larger sites – 10 to 20 MW or larger – however, most built in New York State in the coming years will be 2 MW solar farms, and Cypress currently is not proposing larger sites in the Town of LaFayette.

Q: How can it be the most reliable source of power, doesn’t it depend on the amount of sunshine?

A: The power from the sun is sent to the grid, even in areas that do not have a lot of sunshine there is enough energy produced much more efficiently and with less cost. Blackouts and power surges are prevented and there is a lot more resiliency from a network of local power generation, rather than reliance on just a few larger power plants like coal, gas and nuclear. There are storage systems being designed as well that can be added to the NY State grid in the coming years, which will increase the amount of power that can be relied on by solar and other renewables.

Q: Is there any responsibility to the landowner, does the lease run with the land?

A: No, there is no responsibility of the landowner; the company is fully responsible for all improvements to the property, maintenance and operation, similar to a Private Property Lease.

Q: What benefit is it to the landowner to lease to these solar companies? Typically, how much money do they make on a solar farm? Can you give us a ballpark estimate?

A: The lease income is based on the amount of land leased and like all property leases it varies and they are paid in quarterly lease payments. In some cases, leasing a portion of the land can help the landowner achieve an investment they would not otherwise see, and can help some agricultural land owners find additional revenue to support or grow farming operations.

Q: Who and how is the solar farm property maintained?

A: There is a 15’ access road to allow for emergency equipment and 12 -15‘ between the rows of panels, which is generally mowed twice a month. . Once built, the solar farm will require very little maintenance, and they are mostly self-reliant.

Chairman Nakas asked if anyone had any further questions. None were voiced.

Mr. Compitello thanked the Planning Board for allowing him to appear before them and advised that if Town and the Code Committee have any other questions or concerns, to feel free to contact him.

**Member Markoff moved and Member Bush seconded the motion to adjourn. Motion carried.**

Chairman Nakas adjourned the meeting of the Planning Board at 7:54 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Jacqueline Roorda

Planning Board Secretary