

LUNENBURG PLANNING BOARD TOWN OF LUNENBURG

Emerick R. Bakaysa, Chair
Joanna L. Bilotta-Simeone, Vice-Chair
Thomas W. Bodkin, Jr., Clk.
Robert J. Saiia, Mbr.
Nathan J. Lockwood, Mbr.
Marion M. Benson, Planning Director



Tel: (978) 582-4147, ext 5
Fax: (978) 582-4353
960 Massachusetts Avenue
Lunenburg, MA 01462

Minutes
January 9, 2012

Meeting Posted: Yes
Place: Town Hall, 17 Main Street, Lunenburg, MA 01462
Time: 6:30 PM

Present: Joanna L. Bilotta-Simeone, Thomas W. Bodkin Jr., Robert J. Saiia, Nathan J. Lockwood, Marion M. Benson
Absent: Emerick R. Bakaysa

6:30 APPOINTMENT: EPG Solar, 194 Electric Avenue: EPG represented by Michael Borkowski and Robert Babcock, Managing Partners. Mr. Borkowski gave a brief background of EPG Solar, which was formed in 2010 as a subsidiary of Elemental Power Group. The proposed project site is owned by Twin City Baptist Church (TCBC). EPG has a 30-year lease agreement with TCBC for 20 acres of the 188 acre parcel. The project will have a decommission bond for removal of equipment at the end of the 30 years. The 20 acres are open fields located behind TCBC and between Pleasant Street and West Street. EPG will have setbacks of up to 75-100 feet to leave recreational space for neighbors. Evergreens will provide screening with fencing on the site side. Infrared cameras will be used for security. Solar panels are three feet by five feet. Lowest point is approximately three feet off the ground and highest point at nine feet. Panel rows will be oriented east-west, facing the south. EPG anticipates front gate will be located on the west side. Anticipated construction time is four months. EPG has to file with the Conservation Commission.

Review Engineer Steve Marsden, Marsden Engineering, noted that the Lunenburg Building Inspector determined the size of the project justifies a Development Plan Review by the Lunenburg Planning Board. Engineering review notes the submitted documents are generic and need to be made site-specific.

Mr. Lockwood inquired to fence height and will significant re-grading be required for panel erection. Fence height will be eight feet to preclude deer jumping and become trapped in enclosed area. No significant re-grading for panel erection.

Mr. Bodkin Jr. inquired how much energy will be produced. Approximate power for 400 homes. (A bit over four million Kilowatt hours per year.)

EPG would like to visit site abutters to become aware of, and discuss, any concerns.

Ms. Bilotta-Simeone inquired if EPG knew how many residents directly abutted the site. EPG responded approximately 16. Ms. Bilotta-Simeone noted to the audience that a property owner has the right to develop their property as long as they adhere to the bylaws that are in place at that specific time and follow the process that is in place. The Board will request as much buffering/screening as possible from EPG. She also inquired as to who would be responsible for the Payment In Lieu Of Taxes (PILOT) program; the property owner (TCBC) or the applicant (EPG), as EPG is leasing from TCBC. EPG would have the responsibility as they are the owner of the solar panels.

Mr. Saiia inquired if EPG is aware of any decrease in property values in communities that have solar farms. EPG noted they did not have any statistical data, but studies have been done regarding the same with wind farms. The studies reflect no significant change in property values; either up or down. They don't believe the same type of studies have taken place for solar farms as they are very low impact. Mr. Saiia requested EPG do a real estate survey of the communities in which solar farms have been located to determine whether or not housing values decreased/increased. EPG will address that question to the best of its ability at the January 23rd information Meeting.

William Belisle, 642 West Street- Concerned with his property value. He also inquired as to how close the panels would be to the perennial stream and how are they installed. Ms. Bilotta-Simeone noted that EPG must go before the Conservation Commission. Panels are installed by a pole being driven directly into the ground approximately 5-6 feet.

Angelina Belisle, 642 West Street- Voiced concerns with restricting free space for the wildlife. Also concerned with water in her basement as a result of panel installation.

Kristen Burns, 634 West Street- Concerned with soil removal during installation. Trenching will take place for wire to be installed underground, but then soil will be replaced. Inquired as to the zoning. Residential; solar farms allowed in residential zoning under the current zoning bylaw.

Mr. Marsden requested that abutter concerns be provided in writing to the Planning Board for addressing by both himself and EPG.

MINUTES – APPROVAL: Motion Mr. Saiia, approve 11-21-11 minutes, Second, Mr. Bodkin Jr., Motion passed. Motion, Mr. Saiia, approve 12-12-11 minutes, Second, Mr. Lockwood, Motion passed.

PLANNING WORKSHOP: Ms. Benson noted the Comprehensive Land Use Reform & Partnership Act (CLURPA) Senate Bill #1019 which the State anticipates passing. Ms. Bilotta-Simeone noted Town Center packet received from Mr. Lockwood which includes the main features of Town Center, Themes/Goals, Problems/Opportunities, and Brainstorming Examples. Mr. Lockwood suggested that the public be solicited for input, the input be organized, presented to the Planning Board for review and prioritization, and then the Planning Board present options to the public. Ms. Bilotta-Simeone suggested that Ms. Bertram be a part of the process as the Select Board liaison to the Planning Board. Ms. Benson noted the Citizen Survey for the Westminster Community Master Plan which could be adapted for Lunenburg. Discussion was held as to how to disseminate to public, e.g., by hard mail, electronic mail, publicizing on the Town website, etc. The Planning Board will determine what they consider to be Town Center, then submit to the Board of Selectmen and land use departments for feedback. Once the Planning Board, Select Board, and land use departments determine what they consider Town Center, the public will then be asked for feedback. Mr. Bodkin Jr. suggested the possibility of creating a Town Center Overlay District.

PLANNING DIRECTOR'S REPORT:

Solar Bylaws- Solar bylaws from surrounding communities were distributed to Board members. Noted in packet was electronic mail from Town Counsel stating in part; “. . . If you write a bylaw that is so restrictive that it will not allow for large-scale solar projects, then it would be my opinion that you will not be able to deny projects. . . . You would be ‘prohibiting or unreasonably regulating’ solar uses, in violation of c.40A, s.3. . . . The key would be how you define the areas where the large-scale solar uses would be permitted. There is a decision to be made as to what smaller scale solar facilities you would permit as-of-right.” At the present time, Ms. Benson has the names of three “site finders”. She will contact the companies/individuals for specific details. Discussion was held as to whether the Planning Board should request a special town meeting to amend the existing Solar Bylaw, or wait until May Annual Town Meeting. Ms. Bilotta-Simeone and Mr. Lockwood felt there should be a special town meeting. Ms. Bilotta-Simeone requested Ms. Benson pursue financial aspects of a site-finder and provide details at the January 23th Board meeting. Mr. Bodkin Jr. felt it would take until May for the Planning Board to do its due diligence.

A proposal will be submitted for commercial development at 134 Leominster Shirley Road.

Asian Imperial, 332 Massachusetts Avenue, is awaiting Historical Commission decision so they can proceed with demolition of the current building.

David Matthews, Select Board Chair- requested Planning Board review prior Town Counsel correspondence regarding solar bylaw that stated new projects could be placed on hold if the bylaw was in review. Ms. Bertram, Select Board Member, concurred.

MEETING SCHEDULE:

January 23- EPG Information Meeting followed by Planning Board meeting, Town Hall.

ADJOURNMENT: 9:00 PM