

TOWN OF SHELBURNE, VERMONT

Selectboard meeting minutes, Tuesday, August 6, 2019

The Chair called the meeting to order at 7:00 P.M.

Present: members Jerry Storey, Chair, Colleen Parker, and Mike Ashooh; also Town Manager Lee Krohn and others per the sign in sheet.

Motion by Ashooh to approve the agenda; seconded by Parker and approved 3-0.

Approval of the meeting minutes of 7/9/19 was tabled.

Public comments/Library Town Center update : Ruth Hagerman spoke to Library updates - elevator has arrived and is being assembled, which allows many other aspects can be scheduled – furniture, paving, moving back from temporary location (likely mid-September). Progress continues! Linda Riell praised the paving and striping on Falls Road, and the Highway crew for straightening out certain lines. Dave Connery inquired about schedule and intent for paving and crosswalks on Harbor Road.

Selectboard comments: Ashooh had a great time in Alaska, and is glad to be back. Storey seconded Riell's comments, as well as Highway's work on roadside mowing and culverts.

Town Manager's report: Krohn reported on and showed photos of the new flashing beacons at the crosswalk between Town Offices and the Parade Ground; kudos to Eagle Scout Gerrit Pottmeyer for initiating this project and obtaining a grant to help pay for it.

Shelburne Museum proposals for solar arrays on Museum land:

Krohn offered a brief introduction to the purpose of the review under the Town's solar ordinance, and the rationale behind the State's "Section 248" review process. The Town is a party and may comment as deemed necessary or appropriate. Museum Director Tom Denenberg described the purposes of these proposals as enhancing the Museum's economic viability and environmental stewardship. They have an operating budget of over \$6 million/year, employ 78 full time and 85 seasonal staff, along with many volunteers; host 100K visitors/year; estimate a \$16 million/year economic impact, host 8000 schoolchildren per year (10% of total state student population). Electric power costs \$162,000/year on average, being quite energy intensive for climate control of valuable collections. Locations for the solar arrays were selected for minimum aesthetic impact while maximizing economic and ecological benefits.

Derek Moretz and Jake Clark of Encore Solar spoke to the actual proposals and technical/aesthetic/environmental aspects considered. Two arrays are proposed: a larger 500KW array, and a smaller 150KW array.

The 500 KW array was reviewed from various vantage points, and was designed for maximum distance from abutters. Access is proposed via an existing right of way off of School Street. Although questions were asked about alternate access, this would require significant and costly upgrades to the existing farm crossing over the railroad tracks, if permissible at all (VTrans seeks to decrease, not increase number or use of rail crossings due to safety concerns), plus significant tree clearing for sight lines for railroad engineers.

The proposed location also benefits the Town with improved access for water/sewer line maintenance. They have consulted with neighbors regarding screening, and engaged a landscape architect to resolve these matters. Coordination continues regarding water and sewer line locations, and clearances needed during the construction process and for access for maintenance.

The 150 KW array would be located below the concert area. Applicants are working with the Waldorf School regarding siting and screening. Both sites are hard to see otherwise due to topography. Access to this smaller array would be via existing an Museum road, to be extended to the site.

Key aspects of the Town solar ordinance were reviewed; no conflicts were found.

Questions were raised regarding aesthetics and the width/use of the gravel access road, the 'landing pad' of gravel at the terminus with School Street, whether the access road can be located to save the old growth trees and lose the scrub trees, how much construction truck traffic there would be, length of the construction process, whether deliveries be timed to avoid school traffic early morning and mid-afternoon; whether signs for neighborhood quality would be appropriate; whether there would be any restrictions on use of the access road post-construction. Construction period may be 6-8 weeks, traffic varies widely, and there is much manual work by contractors after materials deliveries. Delivery timeframe of panels and racking and inverters is typically two weeks, with one or two trucks per day for main parts; otherwise mostly contractor pickups. Both sites would be built simultaneously for efficiency. Once built, the solar arrays will be enclosed by agricultural style fences and gates. Applicants were praised for being responsive to neighbor concerns.

Regarding use of School Street for access, Encore has done school projects with construction during school hours, and no incidents to date. Encore agreed to coordinate with Town as best as possible, and to try not to schedule deliveries during peak A.M. and P.M. peak traffic times on school days. The Town Manager will inquire of the PD to see if they can help toward safe traffic flow.

Options for action were reviewed – the Town is not required to comment to the Public Utility Commission, but may comment if desired, whether to recommend approval as proposed (or with suggested conditions) or to opposed. It was suggested that these proposals satisfy criteria in the Town solar ordinance, satisfy State goals for renewable energy, that we hope for smooth coordination of traffic, and that it's a well thought out plan,

Motion by Parker to submit a letter of support to the PUC with a strong recommendation for special care to be exercised around the school during peak traffic times; seconded by Ashooh and approved 3-0. The Museum restated its own strong concern for student safety. Applicants hope to begin work this fall, get started as soon as possible in order to take advantage of certain tax credits before the rules change, and complete construction by the end of the year if possible. Background materials prepared by the applicants were praised as informative and helpful.

Motion by Parker to adjourn at 8:57 P.M.; seconded by Ashooh and approved 3-0.

Respectfully submitted by Lee Krohn.

For the Selectboard

Date