

CORNISH PLANNING BOARD
MINUTES
JANUARY 17, 2019

The Cornish Planning Board met on Thursday, January 17, 2019, at 7pm in the Cornish Town Offices. Members present were Bill Lipfert, Acting Chair, Gail McKenzie, and Mary Mancuso; Scott Baker, Selectman; and Heidi Jaarsma, Secretary.

Bill Lipfert called the meeting to order at 7pm.

Approval of Minutes.

Mary Mancuso made a motion to approve the minutes of 12/20/2018. Gail McKenzie seconded the motion, and the vote of the Board was in the affirmative.

Public Hearing re: Proposed Solar Siting Amendment to the Zoning Ordinance.

voting: Bill Lipfert, Chair; Scott Baker, Heidi Jaarsma, Gail McKenzie, and Mary Mancuso

Bill Lipfert opened the public hearing. Heidi Jaarsma made a presentation of the proposed solar siting amendment to the Zoning Ordinance.

Robert Jaarsma asked regarding the connection to the grid. He asked whether the in-ground requirement would limit the capacity. Bill Lipfert replied that in the scenario where a higher capacity evolved over time, the applicant could return to the zoning board. Mr. Lipfert noted that the nameplate capacity maximum was dropped to address potential new technologies that could increase nameplate capacity with a smaller solar land coverage.

Judith Kaufman asked regarding the 5 acre maximum. Bill Lipfert said that the Board wanted to limit the special exception provisions at 5. Heidi Jaarsma stated that the limit was based on New Hampshire Sustainable Energy Association recommendations, submitted to the Board by the Energy Committee, for maximum solar land coverage in rural and residential zoning districts.

Caroline Storrs said that she supported the planning board in the 5 acre maximum. She felt the impact in transmission lines for larger systems would create too great an impact on current infrastructure. The five acre maximum was compatible with the town.

Larry Dingee asked if roof mounted solar needed to comply with the 30 foot setback. Heidi Jaarsma referenced the proposed amendment to article V.C which stated that setback requirements only applied to ground mounted structures.

Bill Gallagher said that he operated his property as a homestead. He asked if an installation bigger than 900 square feet would be considered commercial. Bill Lipfert said that it would be considered commercial. Bill Gallagher was concerned about agricultural land of statewide, local and federal significance. Heidi Jaarsma responded that 5 acre maximum solar land coverage was intended to preserve open space.

Judith Kaufman asked if land would need to come out of current use for the construction of a solar installation. The Board replied that land would need to be taken out of current use.

Will Brown asked for a clarification of the definition of commercial ground mounted solar collection systems. He asked if more than one 5-acre installation could be constructed on a lot. The Board replied five acres was the maximum per lot. An applicant could subdivide but would need to meet all the requirements in the Cornish Subdivision Regulations.

Bill Gallagher asked that the town spend more time on the ordinance and vote on it next year and submitted a letter into the record to that effect.

Joanna Sharf followed up on Will Brown's question. She suggested inserting 'utility' before interconnection.

Will Brown asked about roof mounted commercial solar and whether a building could be constructed for the sole purpose of housing a roof mount solar array. Heidi Jaarsma replied that any new building would have to comply with zoning regulations. Bill Lipfert added that the building would be subject to property taxation.

Peter Storrs commended the Energy Committee and the Planning Board. He felt it was very important to have the ordinance in place to address future situations which may arise. He referenced the cell tower ordinance which went into effect several years before the first cell tower application.

Larry Dingee asked re: the existing commercial solar array. It is smaller than 5 acres. Bill Lipfert discussed the new pole at Millers.

Robert Jaarsma asked what the nameplate capacity would be for a 5 acre array and what the interconnection would be. Bill Lipfert said that it would be site specific considering the variety within the existing pole inventory in Cornish.

Lyle Parry said that he felt it was important to have regulations in place.

Larry Dingee asked, regarding Bill Gallagher's request to delay, what was driving the current proposal. Heidi Jaarsma said that there had been a lack of clarity in the ordinance on a prior solar application.

Judith Kaufman encouraged the Board to bring the ordinance forward this year.

Joanna Sharf said that Energy Committee's mission was to implement last year's town meeting sustainable energy vote and that it would be helpful to have an ordinance in place this year.

Mary Mancuso asked Bill Gallagher why he wanted the Board to wait. Mr. Gallagher said that he felt that the public may not have heard about the hearing. The Board stated that voters will have until March meeting.

Bill Lipfert closed the public hearing at 8:07pm.

Bill asked if anyone wanted to make a motion to postpone until 2020. Gail Mckenzie asked how difficult it would be to amend next year the current amendment, should it pass this year. Heidi Jaarsma replied that the Board would go through the same hearing process. Ms. McKenzie stated that she wanted to have something in place in case an application was submitted.

Bill Lipfert asked for a sense of the Board regarding moving forward with the amendment. Mary Mancuso felt that if the ordinance needed to be changed, the Board could make amendments. Ms. Mancuso added that she was happy with the five acre maximum.

Scott Baker agreed with Mary Mancuso. He felt that the topic had been well-covered.

Gail McKenzie felt that the proposed amendment to the ordinance had been well reviewed. She added that the most important regulation was the requirement that emergency services review the site and be given information regarding emergency procedures.

Heidi Jaarsma asked if the Board would add 'utility' before 'connection' in two places noted by Ms. Sharf. Bill Lipfert said that he did not see a problem with the addition

Mary Mancuso made a motion. Gail McKenzie seconded the motion, and the vote of the Board was in the affirmative, 4-0.

Respectfully submitted,
Heidi M. Jaarsma