

**Approved
Minutes
Hartford Planning Commission
December 05, 2022**

**THIS MEETING WAS CONDUCTED IN COMPLIANCE WITH
THE VERMONT OPEN MEETING LAW
IN PERSON WITH ELECTRONIC PARTICIPATION AVAILABLE**

Present: John Reid, Chair (01-11-24) Bruce Riddle, Vice Chair, (02-07-25) Robin Adair Logan (02-10-23), Toby Dayman (06-28-24), Dillon Bianchi (09-05-25), John Heath (03-22-24), Colin Butler (07-12-24), Kim Souza, Selectboard Liaison and Dana Clawson, Environmental Sustainability Coordinator.

Guest: Jesse Pollard, Lynn Bohi, Laura Simon, Kevin Raleigh, and Francis Mize.

John Reid read the Hybrid Meeting Script and took a roll call.

Public Hearing

John Reid opened the Public Hearing, introduced the Commission and Environmental Sustainability Coordinator, and explained the Hearing process.

Dana Clawson explained that this system does not need preferred siting and that the entire application process for this system will be handled by the PUC

Thomas Hand, the developer, explained that this project has an interconnect agreement with Green Mountain Power and they are going to submit their application to the Public Utilities Commission in January. Power will be sold directly to GMP.

John Reid asked why the application said it will have minimal environmental impact when they are going to cut down trees? Thomas said that in this application environmental impact only applies to animals and plants that are designated to have protected status under Vermont law.

Robyn Adair asked what was going to happen with the trees that were cut down. Thomas said the wood would either be mulched and used for rain water control or used for firewood. A conversation about the impact of burning trees and returning the CO2 they've sequestered into the air. Robyn said she is pro-solar but doesn't like burning wood.

Dillon Bianchi then asked about the lifespan of solar panels, if 25 years is a good estimate, and what happens to the panels when the system is dismantled. Thomas said that solar panel warranties are typically 25 years, but the systems themselves can go for 30-35 years. Thomas also said that many of the materials in a solar panel are easily recyclable, but because we have not had solar panels around in great numbers for 30 years there hasn't been a system in place for recycling them. Solar companies are also

required to set money aside with the PUC to cover the cost of decommissioning the system. The decommissioning will include disposal/ recycling of the system and returning the land to its natural state.

John Heath then asked if the area will be fenced in. Thomas said it's required to have a seven foot fence with a 6 inch x 6 inch holes for small animals to pass through.

Toby Dayman asked what the appearance of the panels will be, dark , light, etc. Thomas said they're dark blue to black.

Toby Dayman then commented that it's a large system and you can see it from route 4 and we should request that vegetation is planted to block the view.

Colin Butler asked what decommissioning means. Thomas said it means removing everything from the site and re-vegetating the site.

Colin Butler asked if vegetation will be controlled mechanically or with chemicals. Thomas said they would use mechanical means.

Colin Butler asked what the straight line on the map was. Thomas said that's the power line.

Colin Butler asked how many poles they expect to erect at the site. Thomas said one or two.

The floor was then opened to members of the Energy Commission, Jesse Pollard from the Energy Commission said he wanted to hear from the abutters and other people in the room.

Laura Simon then spoke and highlighted the importance of protecting trees in the Town Plan.

Bruce Riddle said we've had a number of grass fires recently, what would happen if this occurred at a solar farm. Thomas said some of the wiring would probably melt. Bruce asked if there was a contingency plan in case of fires. Thomas said if anything goes wrong, they should be notified and will take care of it.

There was then a conversation about moving the system closer to the road where there's less trees. Thomas said the PUC will deny a permit if the site is not aesthetically pleasing. Kim Souza asked how much aesthetics impacts the Town reaching its goals. Thomas said the current PUC is very focused on aesthetics. Thomas then referenced an article by Bill McKibbin from last fall on this topic.

Kevin Raleigh spoke as an abutter, he's not against the system but was wondering how long construction will take. Thomas said it will likely take 4-5 months of heavy construction and 2 months of "guys in a pickup truck" doing little things. There are also

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strict rules around when construction can take place. It's something like 7-7 Monday-Friday, limited times on Saturday, and no construction on Sunday's and federal holidays. Kevin then asked when this will start and if it will start next spring. Thomas said it takes a long time to get a permit through the PUC and it will likely start spring of 2024.

Bruce Riddle said he doesn't want to intervene.

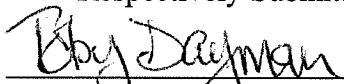
Colin Butler agreed with not intervening but wanted to leave the door open if something comes up.

The Planning Commission agreed not to intervene.

Adjournment

At 7:20 Bruce Riddle made a motion to adjourn Toby Dayman seconded, and the Hearing was adjourned.

Respectively Submitted,



Toby Dayman, Clerk