

Planning Commission Meeting
December 19, 2016
Community Room
7:00PM

Meeting called to order at 7:02PM.

Commissioners Donahue, Goodrich, Rhodes, Supplee, and Fitzhugh present.
Others; Jeff Schulz, Interim Zoning Administrator

VWSD LLC. – Proposed 500 Kw Solar Project – Bull Run

Will and Victor (VWSD) discussed their proposal to construct a 500 kw net metering solar project consisting of 2,140 panels on the former Trucker gravel pit along Bull Run. VWSD is proposing an inter-connection to Northfield Electric's three phase line at the corner of Bull Run and Route 12A. This will require a 1800 foot line extension which VWSD must bear the full cost. Will Veve added that the Electric Commission is assessing the project impacts on Northfield's electrical system. The project is exempt from local zoning and permitting reviews. However, the Select Board and Planning Commission will have an opportunity to comment on the project during the Public Service Board's (PSB) review of the request for a certificate of public good. However, the PSB has the final say on whether the project should be built. VWSD also presented the project to the Select Board meeting, and began discussions on a potential agreement such that the proposed project will provide discounted power for municipal facilities.

The Planning Commission asked about the limits of clearing for the project and noted that it appears that the project includes clearing within and along the edge of the Bull Run right of way. Will Veve responded that this is not the final plan, and there will be no clearing along the edge of the right of way. They plan to maintain a landscape buffer to screen the project. Also, the project will have a chain link fence around it.

Next, the Commission asked about ownership of the project, and the estimated project life. Will Veve responded that VWSD will own the land and a finance company (Green Lantern) will own the solar equipment. The project will be decommissioned in 20 years and VWSD will pay for the decommissioning.

Zoning Bylaws Revisions

Steve Fitzhugh stated that the Commission met last month and received several requested changes to the draft zoning regulations. The Northfield Conservation Commission requests that the Commission include riparian buffer regulations in the bylaws. After a discussion of the issue, the Commission concluded that buffers are not needed because the issue is addressed in other sections, and there are new state logging rules that regulate the issue. In addition, there was concern that such regulations may be difficult to enforce.

Next, the Commission discussed a request by a property owner to change the zoning for the Northfield Falls area to high density residential. This change would potentially increase the number of allowable residential units in the area. The Commission noted that they had changed this area to high density, but subsequently changed it back to medium density in part because of a lack of municipal sewer in the area. After further discussion, the Commission agreed to keep this area zoned medium residential because of the sewer issue, and that any change to high density residential should first include a detailed analysis of the potential impact on this area.

Motion by Darlene Goodrich, seconded by Art Supplee, to forward the draft zoning bylaws to the Select Board. Motion carried 5-0-0.

Motion by Aaron Rhodes, second by Bonnie Donahue, to adjourn the meeting. Motion carried 5-0-0.

Meeting adjourned at 8:10 PM.