

Planning Board – Regular Meeting

Zoom Virtual Platform – www.zoom.us, P: 646-558-8656, Meeting ID: 963 2087 6532, Password: 949664

Wednesday July 1st, 2020 7:00 p.m.

Members Present: Donald Holland, Chair; Walter Gunn, Clerk; Ken Taylor, Bruce Colton, Josh Levine.

Others Present: Curt Freedman

The *Planning Board Virtual Regular Meeting* was called to order at 7:07 p.m. by Chair Donald Holland. He congratulated Josh Levine and Ken Taylor for their election and re-election, respectively, as board members at the town election held on June 16th of the present year.

Preliminary Discussion – Proposed Ground Solar Zoning By-law amendment - Citizen Petition #2, dated February 26, 2020 (ATM Article 37):

Said petition was referred back to the Planning Board during the Annual Town Meeting held on June 23rd. The board's stance on the petition's current language and scope is as follows:

- a) There is concern over the allowance of solar panels (or any other accessory) that would encroach on setbacks set forth by the current zoning bylaws. Looking at the town's landscape, front yard installation of solar panels, in particular, may pose many hurdles in various neighborhoods.
- b) There is consensus on exploring the impact of side yard solar panel installation as long as the area's dimensions allow for adequate panel installation and performance, as well as meet town's expectations on aesthetics and safety.
- c) While the petition provides language on screening the solar panels with wood lattice and natural landscaping, there is concern over the enforcement of landscape screening. The Genesis House project at JGS Lifecare on Converse Street was cited as an example of a project that did not meet the expectations of proper screening with landscape and was the cause of resident complaints.
- d) Due to the fact that a bylaw should be considered applicable to the majority of the town properties, and many properties would likely be ineligible for solar panel installation, it was pondered whether following the path of a bylaw variance on a case-by-case basis may be more feasible; Mr. Freedman cautioned that, per his preliminary informal discussions with the ZBA, the zoning bylaw language as it stands today may not provide a viable solution should Mr. Freedman decide to test the regulations with installation of solar panels in his property. Since Mr. Freedman provided input for the Town of Easthampton's bylaw on side yard solar panels years ago, the board is open to reviewing that language and how it could potentially be adapted to Longmeadow's regulations and expectations.

Furthermore, when asked about reflectivity of the solar panels and its hardware, Mr. Freedman clarified that the panels absorb about 90% of the solar light and any potential reflection by the panels' hardware is intended to have minimal impact to abutters due to the lattice and landscape screening.

Since appealing the decision of the Planning Board not to recommend the Citizen Petition #2, ATM Article 37, as presented is not applicable (town residents can follow or disregard a board or committee's recommendation at the time of voting), the applicant was provided with two alternatives:

1. Present Article 37 at the Fall Town Meeting with its content to remain intact and the Planning Board's non-recommendation to remain.
2. Withdrawn said petition and replace it with a new proposal for solar panel installation exclusively on side yards with improved language and details that will reflect all the key points discussed up to date.

Mr. Freedman expressed interest in potentially pursue option #2 and thanked the Planning Board for its ongoing guidance in the matter.

Planning Board Reorganization:

Walter Gunn made a motion, and was seconded by Ken Taylor, to nominate Don Holland for the position of Chair for FY2021. Roll call vote was; Mr. Colton: yes; Mr. Taylor: yes; Mr. Levine: yes; Mr. Gunn: yes; Mr. Holland: abstained. All in favor 4-0, motion carries unanimously.

Don Holland made a motion, and was seconded by Bruce Colton, to nominate Walter Gunn for the position of Clerk for FY2021. Roll call vote was; Mr. Colton: yes; Mr. Taylor: yes; Mr. Levine: yes; Mr. Holland: yes; Mr. Gunn: abstained. All in favor 4-0, motion carries unanimously.

Walter Gunn made a motion, and was seconded by Ken Taylor, to nominate Don Holland as representative of the Planning Board on the Community Preservation Committee for FY2021. Roll call vote was; Mr. Colton: yes; Mr. Taylor: yes; Mr. Levine: yes; Mr. Gunn: yes; Mr. Holland: abstained. All in favor 4-0, motion carries unanimously.

Meeting Minutes Review:

1. Public Hearing June 3rd, 2020: Bruce Colton made a motion, which was seconded by Ken Taylor, to accept the minutes as presented. Roll call vote was; Mr. Colton: yes; Mr. Taylor: yes; Mr. Levine: yes; Mr. Gunn: yes; Mr. Holland: yes. All in favor 5-0, motion carries unanimously.
2. Regular Meeting June 3rd, 2020: Bruce Colton made a motion, which was seconded by Ken Taylor, to accept the minutes as presented. Roll call vote was; Mr. Colton: yes; Mr. Taylor: yes; Mr. Levine: yes; Mr. Gunn: yes; Mr. Holland: yes. All in favor 5-0, motion carries unanimously.

Bruce Colton made a motion, and was seconded by Josh Levine, to adjourn the meeting. Roll call vote - Mr. Colton: yes; Mr. Taylor: yes; Mr. Levine: yes; Mr. Gunn: yes; Mr. Holland: yes. All in favor 5-0, motion carries unanimously and meeting was adjourned at 7:42pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Bianca Damiano