



Planning Board – Town of Spencer
Minutes
Planning Board Meeting
Tuesday May 21, 2013 at 7:00 PM
McCourt Social Hall
Memorial Town Hall

Planning Board Members Present: Chair James Whalen, Shirley Shiver, RalphDiChiara, Mary Stolarczyk, Robert Ceppi and Associate Member Jonathan Viner.

Planning Board Members Absent: None

Staff Present: Michelle Buck, Town Planner and Brynn Johnson, ODIS Clerk

Mr. Whalen opens the meeting at 7:01pm.

1. ANR- Applicant/Owner: The Brower Family Irrevocable Trust. Location: 38 East Charlton Road. Leonard Jalbert from Jalbert Engineering is present to represent this ANR plan.

Mr. Jalbert explains the purpose of this plan is to divide one existing lot into three (lots A, B & C). Lot A has an existing house on it. Each lot has the required frontage.

Mr. Ceppi asks what the structure is in the back of lot A. Mr. Jalbert says it's an old outhouse.

Mr. Ceppi asks if lot A is for sale. Mr. Jalbert says yes lot A with the house on it is for sale. Lot B will go to someone else, lot C might be sold to the State because it abuts the State Forest.

Mr. Whalen asks if there are any other questions. There are none.

MOTION: Ms. Shiver makes a motion to approve this ANR plan. Mr. Ceppi seconds the Motion.

VOTE: 5-0 in favor. Ms. Buck signs the plan.

2. Continued Public Hearing- Major Site Plan Review, Applicant: Old Wardour Holdings, LLC. Owner: Michael Ballou. Project Location: 22 Treadwell Drive. This is a continued public hearing from April 16, 2013. Mr. Loin is present to represent the applicant.

Mr. Whalen reopens the public hearing.

Mr. Loin updates the Board on changes since the last meeting. They received peer review comments from Graves. He says there is nothing major that has to be changed just a few small details.

They have moved the inverter that was in the middle further away from abutters.

They will be meeting with anabutting neighbor on Friday to discuss the berm.

The berms proposed pines will be changed to spruce trees. The plans show a single row of trees, but they will be staggered to create a better visual buffer.

The elevation of the abutters house is 726 .7 and the top of the berm is 736, 734, 732, 730. Mr. Ceppi notes the house is higher than the berm so when they look out their windows they will see the panels. Mr. Loin says the spruce trees will be six feet tall at planting.

Mr. Whalen has questions from the Graves peer review comment letter dated May 21, 2013.

- Comment #6 (no project narrative/development impact statement was received) Mr. Whalen asks if the project narrative is included in what was submitted to the Board tonight. Mr. Loin says yes.
- Comment #8 (total runoff volumes not tabulated)Mr. Loin says he will have to get that info from Mr. Dubois.
- Comment #21 (riprap apron stone size not added to plan) Mr. Loin says it's under detail.
- Comment #29 (NOI will be filed with the EPA before contraction) Mr. Whalen asks if this Ms. Buck if this should be a condition. Mr. Buck says this will likely be a condition of the Conservation Commission.

Mr. Whalen asks the public if they have any questions or comments.

Ms. Jennifer LeBlance (daughter of Audrey Roberts 18 Treadwell Drive) did research on what a solar farm will do to the property value of her mother's home. She went online and checked property values of homes abutting the solar farm on North Spencer Road (note: this solar farm was approved in 2010 but has not been constructed) She says these homes suffered a 17.6% decrease in value from 2010 to 2011.

Ms. Shiver asks where the home values came from. Ms. LeBlance says she got them from Zillow.com. Ms. Shiver really thinks the only way to be fairly objective is to get an appraisal from a certified general appraiser.

Ms. Roberts expresses concern that her property is going to look like the properties on Paxton Road that abut the 115 Wilson Street Solar Farm. She shows the Board photos of the homes. She doesn't like how the panels are so close to the property lines and taller than the fence on Paxton Road. She also expresses concern that the berm is very close to her house. She spoke to some families on Paxton Road they told her the panels are hideous to look at especially in winter.

Mr. Loin says the fence around the panels would be chain link blackvinyl coated with no barbed wire. He is surprised the Wilson Street/Paxton Road solar farm used barb wire. Ms. Shiver asks for a fence detail for the record.

Mr. Whalen asks if they will have to do any clearing or cutting of trees on Treadwell Drive to get equipment into the site like they did on Paxton Road. Mr. Loin says no; any heavy equipment will come in from the East Brookfield side.

Ms. Shiver feels a landscape architect should design the landscaping for the berm area abutting Ms. Roberts's property.

Mr. Whalen says the main thing with Ms. Robert's property line is they want a significant buffer so the abutter does not see the panels. Ms. Shiver agrees.

Ms. Buck asks if there has been any consideration of using fencing either in place of or in addition to the tress. Mr. Loin says a fence on top of the berm would look out of place. They could do a solid fence along the property line but they thought the more open and green look would be better. Mr. Ceppi asks what will be green. Mr. Loin says the earthen berm and trees. Ms. Shiver asks who will maintain the berm and trees. Mr. Loin says they will; it's in the 50 foot buffer zone so it will be seeded with the same seed mix as under the solar panels the grass will grow to about 12-16 inches and only need to be cut once a year.

Ms. Roberts says it's upsetting to see so many solar farms in the area in various stages of being built. In Spencer alone we have solar farms going in at St Josephs Abby, Wilson Street, North Brookfield Road, North Spencer Road and this one on Treadwell Drive. This is a lot of woods being lost to solar panels. Where will all the wildlife go? How many solar farms do we really need?

Ms. Shiver asks the applicant if they would consider buying Ms. Roberts house at fair market value. Mr. Loin says he would have to talk to his client about that.

Mr. Ceppi asks what the life expectance of the panels is. Mr. Loin says 20 years.

Mr. Viner asks if this site is being sold to Old Wardour Holdings. Mr. Loin says yes; it's being purchased from Mr. Ballou.

Ms. LeBlance asks what happens when in 5 years some other power technology comes along and solar becomes obsolete. Who will come in and take it down. Mr. Loin says there is a decommissioning plan and he's sure there must be some kind of bond required by the Town. Ms. Buck says as of now this Town does not require a bond. Towns have chosen different way to handle the removal. Many towns require bonds; some towns don't want to get involved in that so they make a condition that if the site is abandoned for a period of time the owner will be required to decommission the site or a lien will be placed on it.

Mr. DiChiara says he would just like to make sure the neighbors are taken care of somehow.

Ms. Roberts asks the Board they would like to live next to this. She moved to this country location 35 years ago because she likes the wildlife and now that is all going away.

Mr. Whalen says its bad public policy to approve something the neighbors are unhappy with. He would be interested in hearing from a landscape architect to make sure Ms. Roberts will be happy with the buffer. Ms. Shiver agrees. Mr. Loin says they have a landscape architect that they can use and they will meet with Ms. Roberts to come up with something she will be comfortable with.

Mr. Ceppi asks for a cross section view showing the berm and what the view will be from Ms. Roberts's property. Mr. Loin says yes they can do that.

MOTION: Mr. Ceppi makes a motion to continue this hearing to June 18, 2013 to give time for review and the applicant to meet with Ms. Roberts. **VOTE:** 5-0 in favor.

3. Town Planner Report- Misc. items

- A.) Ms. Buck reminds the Board the Town received a Massachusetts Downtown Initiative Technical Assistance grant for the downtown technical assistance. She met with the grant agency representatives last week. They will have a consultant do an assessment of the downtown housing market. This will take about 6 months. This study is to give the Town some guidance to encourage more residential use in the downtown area.
- B.) Ms. Buck is continuing to do research for the zoning and regulations of medical marijuana she will attend an upcoming conference to look at options on what to do now that they have a temporary moratorium.
- C.) Reminder theregional Chamber of Commerce will have a presentation at the next meeting.
- D.) Update on 115 Wilson Solar Farm. The extra Colorado Spruce trees have been planted. Planning Board members indicated that they would like to visit the site. Ms. Buck will contact the applicant regarding coordination.

4. Approval of Minutes- Minutes from March 26, 2013

Motion: Mr. Ceppi makes a motion to approve the minutes for March 26, 2013. Ms. Shiver seconds the motion.

Vote: 6-0 in favor

5. Adjournment: With no further discussionthe meeting is adjournedat 8:21pm.

Submitted by: Brynn Johnson, Jr. Clerk

Approved by the Planning Board on: 8/20/2013

List of Documents used on May 21, 2013

Items sent to Planning Board prior to Meeting:

- Agenda
- Memo from Michelle Buck to Board dated 5/16/2013
- 3/26/2013 Minutes
- ANR application and plan for 38 East Charlton Road

Items submitted at meeting

- Peer review letter from Graves Engineering dated 5/21/2013
- Treadwell Drive Solar Project overview booklet