

**Town of Pawlet**

**Planning Commission Meeting**

**Monday, July 26, 2021 7:30pm**

**Meeting in person at Pawlet town hall**

**And via Zoom platform**

**Members present:**

Jessica Van Oort, Chairperson

John Sabotka, Vice Chairperson

Rik Sassa, Clerk/Secretary

Frank Nelson

Gary Baierlein

Mark Frost

Wayne Clark (alternate member)

**Members absent:**

Tom Collard

**Item 1. Call to Order:**

Chairperson Jessica Van Oort called the meeting to order at 7:32pm

**Item 2. Approval of Agenda Items- Review/Add/Delete:**

Gary Baierlein wanted to add to the agenda a discussion about conditional uses regarding contractor's yard. He felt that the issue has come up often recently but continues to be pushed to a back burner. He felt that it is essential to get this worked out so business owners can conduct their businesses effectively. Jessica said that there had been a discussion regarding splitting the commission's time between the enhanced energy plan and further discussion of the contractor's yard in one of the past meetings. Jessica asked the commissioners present where the focus should be. Gary thought that certain conditional use issues should be separated out like contractor's yard and village commercial then take a few meetings to hammer out the details and then warn it for the public.

Frank Nelson thought that last meeting's video was important and relevant to this issue. He said that Annette (the speaker from last meeting) outlined that the town has no protection from large solar concerns. Jessica said if we get our enhanced energy plan in place we will have some say that will have to be listened to. Gary still felt that the commission has made objections and comments about energy siting plans in the past and the energy companies have always done whatever they wanted regardless.

Wayne Clarke thought that looking at the map of transmission lines would help the commissioners to decide what areas to protect and prioritize. Gary felt that the issue has always been about what to conserve and what not to and how priorities and provisions change over time (ie: insisting on planting screening trees that later grow up and obstruct needed road curve visibility).

Jessica said an agenda for that night's meeting needed to happen. She suggested having an enhanced energy plan discussion then old business. Gary made a motion to accept that agenda and Frank seconded the motion.

**Item 3. Approval of minutes of previous meeting:**

John Sabotka made a motion to approve the previous minutes, Frank seconded and all approved.

**Item 4. Zoning Administrator's Report- Jonas Rosenthal:**

Jonas Rosenthal was not available for a report.

**Item 5. Rutland Regional Commission Report- Tom Collard:**

Tom Collard was not present for a report.

**Item 6. Discussion of Topics and On-going Business:**

Jessica brought up some maps and information on zoom for the commissioners to view. Jessica read from a document on the screen. Point one is to make very specific areas designated for solar planning and conservation. Frank thought that if our plan met the state's guidelines in terms of language then the town will have substantial deference, but if it doesn't meet all the states criteria then the town will not be recognized and lose its place at the decision making of any future energy siting. Frank said that Annette's experience on this issue is vast and she would be willing to look over whatever the commission writes up in terms of a plan. The second point is to provide specific guidance in terms of actual development. To satisfy the state road names and mountains need to be named specifically and extent of development in these areas needs to be specified. One of the public present asked why all the conversation around is solar and wind when both seem so contentious. She mentioned the SMR's (small modular reactors) and having an energy plan that looked further into the future rather than the 25 years that solar panels typically last. Jessica commented that there are other energies mentioned in the plan as well as a flexible statement (that was added two meeting ago) that would include other technologies that may arise. Harley Cudney (public) wondered where the

language regarding placement of energy generators came from. Jessica said that Annette used the language in her presentation and that some came from state documentation. Frank and Jessica informed the public present that all the documentation as well as the most current revisions of the enhanced energy plan are available on the town website via dropbox. One member of the public thought that exact verbiage could be done more precisely with maps that indicate exact locations of areas for solar, no solar, etc..

**Item 7. Public Comments:**

Monica (public) wondered if the public would be able to vote on the final plan. Jessica said that public input comes during the warned meetings and then the Selectboard will make a decision after considering all the comments and information.

**Item 8. Old Business:**

No old business.

**Item 9. New Business:**

The most recent solar array proposed on an old slate quarry dump off of Button's road was discussed. The commissioners felt that the project was perfectly sited, taking advantage of the Industrial zoning area. Frank noted further that the 3 mile wide slate corridor would be advantageous to energy companies in terms of heavier supply lines and future energy sites all in close proximity to each other.

Jessica moved on to the discussion regarding conditional uses. Jessica mentioned that she had been asked about Airbnb style rentals. Rik Sassa noted that according to the state legislature, there is no distinction between a single family living in a home and a home that is rented to a single family as a vacation rental, therefore any conditional use language would be moot. Frank spoke about the possibility of a design review board to help with changing needs of the town as well as eliminating minutia in specifying some zoning issues . Gary said the DRB already has some control regarding that.

Jessica wanted to sketch out what the commission could tackle for the coming year and the order in which the PPC should handle issues. It was decided that the meetings would continue to be split. The first part of the next meeting will address the contractor's yard conditional use. The second part will address the maps regarding specific roads and areas for energy citing for the enhanced energy plan.

**Item 10. Set Agenda for next meeting:**

Call to Order 7:30 2. Approval of Agenda Items - Review/Add/Delete 7:31 3. Approval of minutes of previous meeting 7:33 4. Zoning Administrator's Report – Jonas Rosenthal 7:45 6. Rutland Regional Planning Commission Report – Tom Collard 8:00 7. Discussion of Topics & On-going Business 8:05 8. Public Comments 8:25 9. Old Business 8:35 10. New business 8: 45 11. Set Agenda for the next meeting 8:55 12. Adjournment 9:00

**Item 11. Adjournment:**

**Gary made a motion to adjourn, Mark seconded the motion. All agreed. Meeting adjourned at 9:05pm**

**Respectfully submitted by Rik Sassa, Secretary/clerk**