

Town of Pawlet

Planning Commission Meeting

Monday, September 27, 2021 7:30pm

Meeting via Zoom platform

Members present:

Jessica Van Oort, Chairperson

John Sabotka, Vice Chairperson

Rik Sassa, Clerk/Secretary

Frank Nelson

Gary Baierlein

Mark Frost

Jonas Rosenthal, Pawlet Zoning Administrator

Josh Castongay (Green Mountain Power representative)

Maria (public)

Martha and Bob (public)

Nancy Morlino (public)

Harley Cudney (public)

Members absent:

Tom Collard

Wayne Clarke (alternate)

Item 1. Call to Order:

Jessica called the meeting to order at 7:36pm

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

Item 3. Approval of minutes of previous meeting:

John Sabotka motioned to approve the previous meetings minutes, Mark Frost seconded and all approved.

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

Jonas Rosenthal said that some of the recent permits have some issues. An example is permit application for "food catering", where Pawlet has "food processing." Jonas had drafted some language sent to the DRB that would clarify that issue. Another possible change: "One family dwelling on a five acre lot," he thought "or greater," should be added. Frank Nelson asked Jonas what would be required in terms of man hours to get the records in order since there is grant money that could be used to digitize records. Jonas was interested. Jessica said the money would be allocated at the discretion of the Select Board.

Item 5. Rutland Regional Commission Report- John Sabotka:

John did not make it to the RRC meeting so he had no report.

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

Jessica spoke about a few on-going town grants. One involved the building next to the rail trail in the center of West Pawlet to turn it into a visitor's center. The grant ask would be for around \$250,000. Another was a grant for the master plan for West Pawlet village. Jessica asked for any one that would like to be a part of that effort. She also thought it would be a good idea to apply for a grant to work on the town by-laws. John had a question as to who owned the parking area next to the railtrail and adjacent to the building in question. Frank said the town owns that parking area since it was part of D+H railway. Jessica said there is already free Wi-Fi set up at that location.

Item 7. Public Comments:

Jessica opened the public comments for questions to Josh. There were no questions from the public. In response to a question of Frank's regarding putting something in the energy plan about the nature of the power transmission, Josh said that he thought that it would be more helpful to identify the land areas that you would not want to see power generated on. Frank also wanted to provide expansion by having an industrial park. Jessica said that the Industrial zone would be the next zoning district to discuss on the list.

Item 8. Old Business:

No old business discussed.

Item 9. New Business:

Josh Castongay from GMP came to speak to the committee. Jessica noted the solar installation on one of the slate quarries and also mentioned the low level of available future power transmission according to the state maps. Josh spoke about the solar resources available. One is a solar map online and it tells how much power is on the line from the substation. It only shows solar generation on the line. As the solar power adds up it flows back to the substation. Josh explained that there is a limit to the amount of power that the substation can take from solar installations. Larger solar projects are in the cue (first come first serve) which factors into

the total amount allowed based upon the substation. The substation has some wiggle room before being overloaded so all residential rooftop installations are allowed (15 kilowatt and under). Josh clarified the confusion that the state map created. The 10% available transmission space on the lines applies to what further solar installations the substation can support. It does not indicate that the power transmission lines are almost maxed out. Once a large solar project gets on the cue then the theoretical amount of solar power produced absorbs some of the available space allowed to return to the substation. Currently the solar generation cue for larger projects is full and the only available space for solar transmission back to the substation is reserved for rooftop solar under 15K.

Josh also explained that the further a large solar project gets from the substation the more upgrading of interconnection circuits is required. In other words, the wire size gets smaller the further away from the substation. Frank asked about wind generation and how it made sense in terms of transmission wires etc.. Josh agreed that larger scale wind generation would have draw backs if they were not near the substation. Frank asked about clustering of projects to help defray the upgrade costs that get passed along to the larger producers. Josh said that is something that is done.

Frank spoke about a potential community solar project on the town owned slate dump just outside of West Pawlet. This would be a project that townspeople could buy into. Josh said you can do a PPA (usually for larger projects, a sort of cooperative of solar producers), however, currently the Pawlet cue is full. To go beyond that, the cost increase for a community project would be prohibitive. Frank said if towns lose their capacity due to for profit larger projects then eventually there won't be any room for private solar. Josh said currently there is nothing that distinguishes between a town solar project and a for-profit project. Frank asked about the rule that allows companies to hold a cue spot and for how long. Josh said there are some milestones and limits, but agreed that the rules had to be readdressed. Harley Cudney (public) asked about the cost of a substation upgrade. Josh said it would be a couple of million to upgrade a station like Pawlet's (doubling the capacity).

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 Baierlein motioned to adjourn the meeting. Frank seconded the motion and all agreed. Meeting adjourned at 9:06pm.

Respectfully submitted by Rik Sassa, secretary/clerk