

**Note: These proposed minutes should be considered preliminary until they are approved by the board at a future meeting.**

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**NORTHFIELD PLANNING BOARD  
THURSDAY, MAY 20, 2021  
REGULAR MEETING/DELIBERATIVE MEETING ON THE APPLICATION FOR A  
PROPOSED SOLAR INSTALLATION ON PINE MEADOW ROAD - 4:00PM  
REMOTE LOCATION  
MEETING MINUTES**

Members Present: Chair Stephen Seredynski (SS), Joe Graveline (JG), Tammy Pelletier (TP), Meg Riordan (MR); Homer Stavely (HS)

Members Absent: none

Members of the Press: Zack DeLuca - *Greenfield Recorder*

Others in Attendance: Rich Riccio - Field Engineering, Jackie Firsty - BlueWave Solar, Nathan L'Etoile, Beth Bazler - FirstLight Power, Mike Marsch - BlueWave Solar, Mike Zimmer- BlueWave Solar, Heath Cummings, Melissa Gamache, Melissa Kalinowski, Christopher Kalinowski, Jenny Tufts, Bee Jacque, Beth Greenblatt - Beacon Integrated Solutions, Peggy Kocoras.

*Please note, because of Zoom's participation structure, attendance is incomplete.*

***I. CALL TO ORDER***

SS called the meeting to order at 4:01pm. MR gave a presentation on video-chat etiquette, and reviewed the agenda. SS reminded attendees that the Planning Board must make legally defensible decisions based on voter-approved bylaws, and not personal opinions.

***II. ESTABLISH A QUORUM***

Quorum was met.

***ARRAY A:***

***I. SITE PLAN REVIEW***

Beth Greenblatt of Beacon Integrated Solutions shared slides of the Site Plan and Special Permit Materials for Solar Array A, and provided some history and an overview of the project and its site. Highlights included:

- The project
- The applicants
- How BlueWave operates
- The farm operator
- Chapter 61A and the parcel's release from the covenant
- Natural and historic considerations, including working with the Atowi Project and archaeologists
- Siting considerations (setback, visibility, stormwater)
- Utility interconnection



- Surety (for decommissioning) and property tax
- Beacon Integrated Solutions's recommendations for the special permit conditions
- General compliance overview.

HS asked if construction would begin only after the archaeological and Atowi reports are reviewed. Beth and Jackie Firsty of BlueWave confirmed this is true. SS elaborated further, and noted that the town's legal counsel said the Planning Board could vote, and then include this in special conditions.

JG asked a question about the applicants. JG stated he and some townspeople are confused about whether the Planning Board is issuing a special permit for a farming operation, which is outside the Planning Board's authority. JG stated there are several types of solar projects.

SS noted the Planning Board is not meeting to debate different types of solar projects. SS added this project is well documented, and it is the subject of the Planning Board's deliberation and vote.

JG began describing different types of solar projects. JG disputed this project is "farm-supplemental solar." JG called into the question the state's understanding of, and the University of Massachusetts's support for, these types of solar projects.

SS asked if other members of the Planning Board wanted to debate JG's concerns.

HS pointed out some of the project's aspects and how they support the applicant's continued agricultural use of their land. HS noted that whether the University of Massachusetts is fully on-board with a project of this type is irrelevant to whether the Planning Board can issue this special permit, as the Planning Board is following the town's bylaws. MR referred to the town's Master Plan and how it applies to, and supports, this project.

TP asked JG to provide the source of the statement he read regarding the University of Massachusetts. JG said it is in the January 31, 2020 response to the pre-application.

A discussion ensued on high-productive farmland, and whether this project takes it out of production.

JG stated he had received letters from, and had conversations with, farmers who expressed concern that this project will affect their access to farmland. MR noted the Planning Board took public comment from across the community.

HS shared JG's concerns that this project could lead to other project proposals of a similar nature in Northfield. A discussion ensued.

JG asked if he could read statements from a University of Massachusetts scientist into the record. SS said JG is disingenuous for not sending this information to the Planning Board ahead of time. JG said he sent this information to some members of the Planning Board. SS reminded JG that this vote is about the current zoning bylaws.

JG expressed his concern with siting a large solar project in a residential neighborhood.

JG made the claim that decisions had been made "behind the scenes." SS noted the Planning Board has had several public meetings on this matter since December. JG countered that "the process" had been

going on for five years. JG read some state zoning laws and provided his interpretation of them. SS noted this is why the Planning Board is deliberating on a special permit.

MR clarified the Chapter 61A process on this parcel, and reminded JG that the Planning Board is not voting on the process at this meeting; they are voting on this particular project's application.

Jackie Firsty referenced some of JG's statements from the University of Massachusetts scientist and noted their relevance to, and effect on, the project.

JG read into the record a statute addressing solar overlay districts: MGL 40A S.4 Uniformity of Zoning.

JG said if the project was part of the solar overlay district, he would "approve it in a heartbeat." HS noted the bylaws permit the installation of public utilities, and this project is a public utility, so it is allowed.

**VOTE ON THE SOLAR ARRAY A SITE PLAN REVIEW (VIA ROLL-CALL):**

**MR: YEA**

**HS: YEA**

**JG: NAY**

**TP: YEA**

**SS: YEA**

**SITE PLAN REVIEW PASSES, 4-1**

***II. SPECIAL PERMIT APPLICATION***

**VOTE ON THE SOLAR ARRAY A SPECIAL PERMIT APPLICATION (VIA ROLL-CALL):**

**MR: YEA**

**HS: YEA**

**JG: NAY**

**TP: YEA**

**SS: YEA**

**SPECIAL PERMIT APPLICATION PASSES, 4-1**

***III. APPROVE POLE PLACEMENT OPTIONS: OPTION 1 VS. OPTION 2***

Beth Greenblatt recommended Option 2. HS concurred, and noted it is safer for the conditions on Pine Meadow Road.

**VOTE ON THE OPTION 2 POLE PLACEMENT (VIA ROLL-CALL):**

**MR: YEA**

**HS: YEA**

**JG: YEA**

**TP: YEA**

**SS: YEA**

**OPTION 2 POLE PLACEMENT PASSES UNANIMOUSLY**



## ***ARRAY B:***

### ***I. REVISED PLACEMENT OF PANELS***

### ***II. SITE PLAN REVIEW***

Beth Greenblatt shared slides of the Site Plan and Special Permit Materials for Array B, and noted they are of a similar format to the slides from Array A. Highlights included:

- An overview
- Parcel information
- Applicant information
- Project summary
- Property restrictions
- Natural and historic considerations
- Siting considerations (setback, visibility, stormwater)
- The Conservation Commission's approval of the revised design
- Utility interconnection
- Surety (for decommissioning) and property tax
- Beacon Integrated Solutions's recommendations for the special permit conditions
- General compliance overview.

### **VOTE ON THE SOLAR ARRAY B SITE PLAN REVIEW (VIA ROLL-CALL):**

**MR: YEA**

**HS: YEA**

**JG: NAY**

**TP: YEA**

**SS: YEA**

### **SITE PLAN REVIEW PASSES, 4-1**

Jackie Firstly asked for confirmation that the Planning Board had just voted to approve the revised plans that the Conservation Commission had approved at their meeting on May 19. SS responded: yes.

### ***III. SPECIAL PERMIT APPLICATION***

### **VOTE ON THE SOLAR ARRAY B SPECIAL PERMIT APPLICATION (VIA ROLL-CALL):**

**MR: YEA**

**HS: YEA**

**JG: NAY**

**TP: YEA**

**SS: YEA**

### **SPECIAL PERMIT APPLICATION PASSES, 4-1**

## ***ARRAY C:***

### ***I. SITE PLAN REVIEW***

Beth Greenblatt shared slides of the Site Plan and Special Permit Materials for Array C, and noted they are of a similar format to the slides from Arrays A and B. Highlights included:

- An overview
- Parcel information
- Applicant information
- Project summary
- That the Conservation Commission decided they do not have jurisdiction over this parcel
- Property restrictions
- FEMA flood zones
- Natural and historic considerations
- Siting considerations (setback, visibility, stormwater)
- Utility interconnection
- Surety (for decommissioning) and property tax
- Beacon Integrated Solutions's recommendations for the special permit conditions
- General compliance overview.

JG asked if the new, upcoming federal floodplain insurance guidelines were integrated into the proposal. Beth responded: she has not read them. Rich Riccio of Field Engineering explained how the project's plans comply with previous and current flood datum. None of this project, Rich noted, is within the current mapping of the flood zone, and the Conservation Commission concurred, as did their consultant.

A discussion ensued on the proposal's planned structures and the potential for flooding, and how the latter may affect the former.

Beth, MR, and Jackie discussed the recording of the lease agreement at the Franklin County Registry. Jackie noted that once the lease is drawn up and signed, it will be submitted for recording.

#### **VOTE ON THE SOLAR ARRAY C SITE PLAN REVIEW (VIA ROLL-CALL):**

**MR: YEA**

**HS: YEA**

**JG: YEA**

**TP: YEA**

**SS: YEA**

#### **SITE PLAN REVIEW PASSES UNANIMOUSLY**

### ***II. SPECIAL PERMIT APPLICATION***

#### **VOTE ON THE SOLAR ARRAY C SPECIAL PERMIT APPLICATION (VIA ROLL-CALL):**

**MR: YEA**

**HS: YEA**

**JG: NAY**

**TP: YEA**

**SS: YEA**

#### **SPECIAL PERMIT APPLICATION PASSES, 4-1**

SS announced this project is approved by the Planning Board.

SS announced that the Planning Board's next step is to meet to discuss applying conditions to the permits. SS said he will confer with MR on the scheduling, and how to integrate suggestions from the Planning Board.

**MOTION BY SS TO ADJOURN THE MEETING AT 5:52PM. JG SECONDED. MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.**

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Respectfully submitted by Wendy M. Levy from minutes taken by Wendy M. Levy.

This represents my understanding of the above dated meeting. If you have any changes, please submit

APPROVE June 24, 2021  
Pat O'Flaherty - chair