

Zoning Board of Appeals Meeting Minutes
September 20, 2018 7:03 p.m.
Northfield Town Hall

Members Present: Erin Jaworski, Acting Chair, Shawn Foster, Timothy Rogers, Bill Forrest Al Dietrich and Vivien Venskowski, administrative assistant.

Absent Jennifer Cox

As the Chair Jennifer Cox was not able to attend the meeting Jaworski was acting chair. She opened the business meeting at 7:03 pm. She noted that she had the abutter certified mail receipts, the 2 Recorder tear sheets for the legal notices. She read the legal notice and requested the applicant present their proposal.

Kirt Mayland representative for Park Avenue Solar Solutions, introduced representatives from SVE and The Lane Construction Corporation. He noted he was an environmental attorney and wanted to keep the environmental impact to a minimum. This site was ideal as there are no close neighbors, no lighting issues, no clear cutting required, no wetland impact, setback was 1,500 ft., and that 20 acres would be used for the 4.5 MW system. He explained the installation process, and that they were negotiating with Eversource for a 20 year contract. The benefits to the town are personal property and real estate taxes. The property is located in the RA and solar overlay district, it is above the 1,500 Sq. Ft. threshold and requires a special permit. The State has a new solar program that will be announced shortly. The panels will either be fixed or single access tracks (move with the sun). He explained the setup and installation process, how the AC would be transferred to DC, additional and existing poles, upgrades the existing infrastructure might require, and that they were waiting for Eversource's cost estimates. Park Avenue Solar Solutions must pay for any electrical related upgrades. If the Eversource upgrade estimates are reasonable and the project is approved construction will start in the spring. The property has an existing 7 ft. chain fence and 3 access gates.

Tony Wonseski from SVE Associates presented information on the existing infrastructure. A new road would need to be created for Lane to access the Robert's property, most of the area is ledge which would be scraped to create new road. An existing road would be used for the solar project, this project would not affect the Robert property. He noted the panels would be located in the reclaimed gravel pit and would not be visible from the road, they would not be in the 100 ft. wetlands buffer, instead of burying the lines, poles would be installed which would not damage the wetlands. He noted that trenching to bury lines causes more damage than pole installation. Area will be seeded with slow growing grass seed, no herbicides, no storm water impact because it is in a meadow, project is low maintenance, monitored 24x7, electricians come out twice a year to inspect inverters, panels are sloped so snow will melt off, dust may accumulate then the panels would need to be washed, tractor trailer trucks will deliver panels, public safety/police and fire will be updated on safety aspects and will have access to lockbox, and emergency contact information will be available on signage on fencing. Wonseski said there will be digging/drilling at the end of each row of panels, to bury panel lines, however tech borings still need to be done. There would be no blasting. Size of project would not increase as it would require another level of studies and could hold up the project another year.

Questions from Board and answers from representatives:

Park Avenue Solar Solutions is leasing 20 acres from Lane, they are expecting panels to last 20 – 30 years, defective panels can be swapped out, panel designs are improving, 90% of the cost is upfront, this project has a long payback, free fuel source, 20 year payback, bond for decommissioning to Town, Lane to remove panels at end of use, the bank will monitor the project, bond is annually reviewed, 45 day notice from bond company to cancel, if a new bond was required a new bond company or cash bond would be put up, large capital bond, notification could be part of the ZBA conditions, the bond was finalized about a week ago and if the project size did increase the applicant representatives noted they would need to return to the ZBA.

No abutters in audience.

Discussion continued regarding the following questions and answers: the taxes would be paid on the personal property, there would be a tax agreement with the Assessors which the Selectmen would need to approve. The Selectmen's authority was approved at the Annual Town Meeting May 2018. Many people would be employed during construction but not after, this project has no impact on public facilities, a local ONL team/electrician would be available for any emergency, inverters can be shut off by row or inverter, lightening has not been an issue as panels are low to ground, good ground stability at this site, panels will be in rows/some gain with tracker panels, 6% return/Eversource involvement gives credibility to project.

The Acting Chair closed the public comment portion of the meeting at 7:56 pm.

The Board members discussed the Planning Board memo regarding the solar project site plan review and the information presented. It was noted the project was in the solar overlay district however it was larger than allowed and therefore a special permit from the ZBA is required. It was noted there would be no lighting issues, no noise issues, no trash issues, no neighbors close by, there would be fencing, the special permit is to install and run a solar facility they are not requesting a change of use or changing Lane's special permit.

Conditions were discussed: annual notice of renewal of decommission bond to Town Clerk, follow Lanes working hours during construction, will adhere to Site Plan dated July 23rd, 2018 and approved by the Planning Board on August 8, 2018.

On a motion by Rogers, seconded by Foster it was unanimously voted (Jaworski/yes, Foster/yes, Dietrich/yes, Rogers/yes, Forrest/yes) to grant a special permit on an application by Park Avenue Solar Solutions for a Special Permit or whatever relief is needed for the construction, operation and maintenance of a 4.5 MW Ac ground mounted commercial solar facility at 0 Mt. Hermon Station Road, Northfield, MA 01360 (Assessors Map Parcel 25 A1) with the following conditions

- 1. Annual notice of renewal of decommission bond must be submitted to the Northfield Town Clerk**
- 2. Follow Lane's working hours during construction**
- 3. Will adhere to Site Plan dated July 23rd, 2018 and approved by the Planning Board on August 8, 2018.**

The Acting Chair explained the 20 day appeal process to the applicants.

On a motion by Foster, seconded by Dietrich it was unanimously voted to approve the minutes of September 12, 2018 as amended.

A business meeting was scheduled for Thursday September 27, 2018 to review and sign the Notice of Decision.

On a motion by Dietrich, seconded by Forrest it was unanimously voted to adjourn the meeting at 8:32 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Vivien Venskowski
Administrative Assistant to
The Zoning Board of Appeals