

Shaftsbury Planning Commission
January 28, 2020

Call to order

The meeting came to order at 6:02 p.m. Present were commissioners Chris Williams (chair), Mike Foley, Naomi Miller, and Mike Cichanowski. Zoning administrator Shelly Stiles was also present.

Minutes

Mr. Cichanowski moved to approve the January 14, 2020 minutes. Mr. Foley seconded the motion. The minutes were changed to note that Mr. Cichanowski (not Mr. Foley) seconded the motion to approve the December 18, 2019 minutes. The motion passed 4-0-0.

Green Lantern Solar

Ralph Meima, director of development for Green Lantern Solar (GLS), approached the board regarding a proposed solar array on parcel 05 01 62 at Sally Gannon and Murphy Hill Roads. He said GLS is headquartered in Waterbury, but does business throughout the state, from Pownal to Derby, for a total so far of more than 85 projects in more than 65 towns. He briefly described the net metering concept. GLS is not only the developer for but also, increasingly, the owner of many of its projects. Its investments are debt financed and funded by tax credit investment vehicles. Many private landowners approach them about installing solar on their properties, as happened in this case with the Chipello family. In the last ten months, GLS has had a wetland assessment of the property done and has applied to Green Mountain Power for permission to connect to the grid. The last major task to do is to secure a letter stating the site is a "preferred site" from the Shaftsbury Planning Commission. Without this letter, the Public Utility Commission will not issue credits to GLS that make the project feasible. He shared the draft letter with the commissioners.

Mr. Meima said the PUC won't give permits for arrays larger than 150KW unless they connect to three-phase systems. But arrays of 150KW or smaller are routinely permitted to connect to single phase systems, as would be the case on the Chipello property. GLS has built many single phase-150KW projects.

Mr. Meima said the project would not be fenced. However, sensitive components will be covered with a plastic mesh to prevent accidental electrocution by people or animals.

Mr. Meima noted that the Commission would have additional opportunities to weigh in when the 45-day intent to apply notice is given, and again when the formal application is filed.

Mr. Meima said only tracked vehicles would enter the site. There will be no grading and no concrete will be poured. Instead, steel I beams will be pounded in to a depth of 7'-8'.

Mr. Cichanowski moved to sign the preferred site designation letter for the proposed solar array at Sally Gannon and Murphy Hill Roads. Mr. Foley seconded the motion, which passed 4-0-0.

The Planning Commission scheduled a site visit to the site for Monday February 3, 4 pm. The ZA will warn the meeting.

Roadside Commercial, Route 7A

The commission discussed the possible impacts of designating the cluster at 7A and Hidden Valley Road as commercial. It could mean the owner of Clearbrook would no longer have to meet the requirements of the Agency of Agriculture for a farm-based business. Mr. Cichanowski thought the proposal could be a flash point, and that neighbors not so designated would complain and ask to be considered RC as well. Mr. Foley and Ms. Miller expressed concern that the hill, speeding traffic, and the parking situation at the Chocolate Barn might argue against encouraging commercial traffic here. Commissioners were unable to reach the Buxbaums, Becker, or the owner of the Federalist house.

Would RC there make it more likely that Dollar General could move in? If so, the old inn at Old Depot Road might best be left out of the designation. The group discussed what to do about Vermont's looming demographic crisis. Mr. Cichanowski argued for generational equity. Mr. Williams urged the commissioners to think about where the RC cluster boundary should be drawn for the next meeting.

The January 28 meeting adjourned by acclamation at 7:50 p.m.