

Town of Shaftsbury Planning Commission  
August 10, 2021

Call to order

The meeting came to order at 6:05 p.m. Present were commissioners Chris Williams (chair), Martha Cornwell, and Mike Foley; zoning administrator Shelly Stiles; and for Encore Renewable Energy, Jake Clark.

Outstanding minutes

Mr. Foley moved to approve the June 22 minutes. Ms. Cornwell seconded the motion. Mr. Williams asked that a sentence in the fifth paragraph be changed to "Mr. Williams said we shouldn't make policy on the basis of what might happen, but rather on the basis of what has happened." The minutes as corrected were approved 3-0-0.

Other business

Mr. Williams moved this item up the agenda to afford Mr. Clark a chance to speak. He said:

- Encore dates to about 2007 and has 50-60 projects across the state and twelve to fifteen employees.
- Encore proposes for a site on Waite Cemetery Road a 2.2. MW project with about 7500 panels on about fourteen acres of land on a former dairy farm totaling about 340 acres in size.
- A single-axle tracking system will be used, in which panel angles will change throughout the day as they follow the sun. Such a system allows the developer to capture more energy on a smaller footprint.
- The panels will reach to about three feet off the ground at their lowest point and maximum tilt and about twelve feet off the ground at their highest point and maximum tilt. (This to manage snow and vegetation.)
- A perimeter fence will be erected. It will allow the passage of small but not large animals. It will be seven to eight feet high and is required by the code and insurance.
- A transformer on a concrete pad will be located at the southern end of the site, from which point lines will be strung to an existing pole on Waite Cemetery Road.
- Some trees will be required on the east side and west side of the array field to prevent fall-down hazards and shading.
- This is a standard offer project administered by the VT Electric Power Producers Inc. (VEPPI), an independent operator created by the state legislature. The power created will be purchased by all Vermont utilities on a pro rata basis.
- There is almost no visibility into the site from public viewpoints. There are very few residential neighbors.
- Construction will take three-five months ordinarily, but there is a steel shortage at present. A certificate of public good (CPG) process usually takes up to ten months.
- Encore will enter into a contract with VEPPI for 25 years, at the end of which a new term contract can be sought. (A new CPG would be required.)
- A decommissioning plan and bond must be filed. The town will receive a copy of the application to the Public Utility Commission (PUC).
- Mr. Clark sees solar projects as a form of land banking. They will include pollinator plantings and may incorporate sheep herds. Solar leases allow property owners to keep the land in the family rather than having to sell it off piece by piece.

- Maintenance will involve mowing one-two times annually. A data acquisition system will constantly monitor the modules. They can malfunction, and maintenance visits including mowing could total five-ten annually.
- Green Mountain Power will do the upgrades necessary to carry the energy from the site to the GMP substation. Encore will pay the costs of the upgrades. Mr. Clark doesn't think a crossing of Route 7 will be required.
- For standard offer projects, no "preferred site" designation is needed. Instead, the town must affirm the project complies with the Town Plan.

The Commission referenced the Town Plan's "Suitable Areas for Wind, Solar..." section and the list of primary and low priority constraints listed therein. There are no primary constraints on the project site. Regarding low priority constraints, Mr. Williams noted the Plan states "The Shaftsbury Planning Commission has determined that prime agricultural soils and the Center Shaftsbury Historic District should not be considered constraints to solar or wind energy development."

Ms. Cornwell moved to approve the proposed project and to notify the Select Board that it complies with the Town Plan. Mr. Foley seconded the motion, which passed 3-0-0. Mr. Williams will write a letter to the Select Board recommending they approve the project. Mr. Clark said he'd be glad to present at the Select Board meeting.

#### Other high priority projects

Mr. Foley said his high priority actions are a bike path on Route 7A, upgrades to Howard Park, and getting information about Efficiency Vermont programs out to citizens. He will contact VTRans about a bike path and the Recreation Committee about Howard Park. Ms. Stiles will see if Efficiency Vermont has any hard-copy materials it can share. (Ms. Cornwell said she'd spoken with Barb Marino of the Recreation Committee – just three people – and learned that new signs are up at Howard and Cleveland Avenue Parks. Ms. Cornwell said she would mention trails to Ms. Cornwell.)

Mr. Williams said his priorities are revising the subdivision regulations, and town trails.

Mr. Williams said he will not be present for the August 24 meeting. Ms. Cornwell said she would run the meeting.

Mr. Foley moved to adjourn at 7:15 p.m. Ms. Cornwell seconded the motion.

Notes by ZA Stiles.