

MINUTES

ST. LAWRENCE COUNTY PLANNING BOARD

7:00 p.m., Thursday, August 12, 2021
2nd Floor Conference Room, PSC, 49 ½ Court Street, Canton

I. Call to Order

a. **Roll Call and Determination of a Quorum**

Chair Murray called the meeting to order at 7:02 pm. Casserly did a roll call for attendance; a quorum was present (11/15).

	NAME	ABSENT	PRESENT
1.	Eric Alan	X	
2.	Ken Bellor		X
3.	Kim Bisonette		X
4.	Joanne Cameron		X
5.	Don Chambers		X
6.	Priscilla Darling		X
7.	Daniel Fay		X
8.	Mark Gazin	X	
9.	Andy Gilbert		X
10.	Dan Huntley		X
11.	Brian Murray		X
12.	Kitty O'Neil		X
13.	Julia Rose	X	
14.	Cherrie Shatraw		X
15.	Vacant Seat		
	Staff:		
	Dakota Casserly		X
	Jason Pfothauer		X
	Guest:		
	Tracy Dow (Dow Electric)		X
	Dan Leary (Our Generation, solar developer)		X
	Elie Schecter (Our Generation, solar developer)		X

b. **Adoption of the Agenda**

The agenda was unanimously adopted (Shatraw/Gilbert).

c. **Approval of the July 8, 2021 Meeting Minutes**

A majority of the Board voted to adopt the minutes (Fay/Shatraw), Abstention: Murray.

II. Public Forum

- a. Potsdam Community Solar representatives introduced themselves; see list of attendees above.

III. Project Reviews

- a. Referrals Returned Pursuant to MOU - RFLA (Return for Local Action)
Pfothenauer presented a list of 11 projects.
 - i. Brasher (T): Special Use Permit (x2).
 1. Casserly talked about the short-term rental use and that the Board should be aware of an increase in this type of use in the County.
 - ii. Fowler (T): Subdivision and area variance.
 - iii. Massena (T): Site plan approval.
 - iv. Massena (V): Site plan approval, area variance.
 - v. Morristown (T): Subdivision.
 - vi. Ogdensburg (C): Site plan approval.
 1. Pfothenauer shared additional details about this project (car wash) and Staff recommendations.
 - vii. Potsdam (V): Sign permit (x3).
- b. Full Reviews:
 - i. Potsdam (T): 5 MW Solar Array, Potsdam Community Solar 2 (PCS2)
Casserly presented the project and Staff recommendations.

Discussion

1. O'Neil talked about the project review table layout being helpful.
2. Fay asked about the amount of prime farmland on the parcel.
 - a. Gilbert responded, while the data may indicate that there is prime farmland, the reality of draining the parcel for ag use is challenging.
3. Schecter talked about how the developer is planning to submit more documentation that is required in the Town's solar law. He said that the interconnection to the substation across US 11 is in the approval process. This substation will interconnect another project by this developer, Potsdam Community Solar 1 (PCS1). PCS1 construction has just begun.
 - a. Gilbert asked if the substation can handle both projects or does it need upgrades.
 - i. Schecter responded that they have an interconnection agreement with National Grid for both projects. PCS2 is limited to 4.4 MW by the utility, however the project was submitted as 5 MW.
4. O'Neil asked a question about decommissioning costs.
 - a. Casserly replied that the applicant satisfied the Town's requirements.
5. Gilbert asked about battery energy storage (BES) and that the Town should consider adopting a local law in advance of future projects
6. Fay talked about his displeasure with these types of projects and their impact to the Moses-Saunders Power Dam. He also thinks

that BES is problematic. Again, he expressed his concern with the potential loss of prime farmland.

- a. Casserly clarified that the BOL resolution doesn't target prime farmland, rather it encourages the use of marginal lands.
7. Murray said that review for BES and solar projects should remain separate.
8. The Board, by consensus, agreed to add a non-binding recommendation for the Town to consider a BES local law.
 - a. Schecter replied with confirmation that PCS2 does not include BES. He added that [NYS Ag and Markets guidelines for solar and ag lands](#) is helpful and that farmland disturbance is minimal.
9. Huntley is concerned with NYPA and solar/wind project impacts to the power dam, long term. He asked if any studies have been done on this.
 - a. Pfothauer replied that the Board can discuss later in the meeting where it falls on the agenda.
10. Huntley talked about the contract (lease) between the developer and the landowner. He thinks land owners need more legal advice and more support on these contracts.
 - a. Pfothauer responded that Matilda Larson, County Planner assigned to the Farmland Protection Board, has held a model lease workshop in the past. Staff can provide these materials to interested parties.
 - b. Murray said that the Board should refrain from legal advice. Also, he said that it is probably time to hold another workshop.
11. Dow, a Potsdam based electrical contractor, talked about the PCS2 lease agreement with the land owner (Jim Sheehan). Dow said that Jim Sheehan spent a considerable amount of time consulting with an attorney about the lease. He expressed that this is very important.
 - a. Schecter added, land use site lease agreements should involve an experienced attorney.
 - b. Leary added that [NYSERDA's resources per solar and battery energy storage](#) are important, especially land leasing.
- ii. The Board voted unanimously to approve the project with conditions and non-binding recommendations (Gilbert/O'Neil).

IV. Reports

- a. **Executive Committee**
 - i. O'Neil briefly shared meeting information.
- b. **Board of Legislators (BOL)**
 - i. Fay talked about the following:

1. Recently the BOL discussed issues with invasives species, e.g., milfoil (in Black Lake) and water chestnut. They are using the Planning Office for assistance with how to help address invasive species. Waterfront residents around Black Lake are asking for property tax reductions due to invasives.
2. COVID concerns at the County level.
 - a. Murray responded with federal government examples.

c. Highway Department

- i. Chambers talked about how projects are on schedule and 9 out of 10 bridges are under construction.

d. State of the County Roundtable – Discussion on Large Scale Solar Development

- i. Pfothauer talked about large scale solar projects (+100 MW) siting in the County. Presently, the CPB will not directly review these projects, however, they can comment. He also talked about a recent NYPA meeting, with BOL members and the County Administrator, on how NYPA can assist with developing solar on County owned lands.
- ii. Bellor questioned if there is any entity/coordinated effort overseeing solar projects in the County.
 1. Pfothauer responded that the State is leading the regulatory effort on large-scale projects. The SLCIDA and CPB could report on these projects, sort of like a watchdog.
- iii. O’Neil asked about information on the large-scale projects.
 1. Pfothauer replied that there is information on project websites and mentioned intervenor funds.
- iv. Gilbert talked about peak power production impacts, BES ([iron air](#)) concerns, large-scale project substation location, discharge during the peak, emergency response, and how flows at the power dam are adjusted due to wind power.
- v. Chambers talked about electrification concerns with the grid and electric vehicles.
- vi. Staff will share solar and battery information with the Board, e.g., [Rich Road Solar](#).
- vii. O’Neil said that a solar project update should be included on the monthly agenda.

e. Staff Report

- i. Pfothauer talked about EMC work on invasives species and Black Lake, the broadband study, Hammond and Waddington land use regulations, and County Census numbers.

V. Other Items

a. Correspondence

- i. Murray shared the Board’s resignation acknowledgment letter to George Blatchley.
- ii. Pfothauer talked about Lawrence (T) subdivision and a 60 day solar project PILOT notification letter from Omni Navitas.

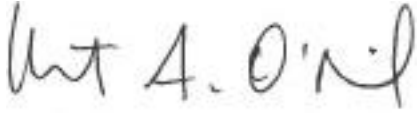
b. Next meeting dates

- i. Executive Committee: Thursday, August 26th at 4:15 pm
- ii. Planning Board: Thursday, September 9th at 7:00 pm

VI. Adjourn

- a. The meeting adjourned at 8:43 pm (Fay/O'Neil).

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Kitty O'Neil".

Kitty O'Neil, Vice-Chair

Minutes prepared by Dakota Casserly