

**ST. LAWRENCE COUNTY PLANNING BOARD**  
**DRAFT MEETING MINUTES**

September 10, 2020

Via Zoom <https://zoom.us/j/94388527944>  
Meeting ID: 943 8852 7944 - Password: 935510

**I. Call to Order**

- a. Roll Call and Determination of Quorum.** Chair B. Murray called the meeting to order at 7 pm. Casserly did a roll call for attendance. A quorum was present.

**Members Present:** E. Alan, K. Bellor, K. Bisonette, D. Chambers, P. Darling, D. Duff, D. Fay, M. Gazin, A. Gilbert, M. McCluskey, B. Murray, K. O’Neil, J. Rose and C. Shatraw, J. Cameron. **Members Absent:** None. **Staff Present:** J. Pfothauer, and D. Casserly. **Others Present:** Cory McCandless, Omni Navitas; Rachel Hunter, Gouverneur Tribune Press.

- **Adoption of the Agenda.**  
The agenda was unanimously adopted (Gilbert, O’Neil).
- **Approval of the Meeting Minutes.**  
The August 13, 2020 minutes were unanimously approved (Shatraw, Duff).

**II. Land Use Training Session (30 minutes)**

Site Plan Review Checklist

Pfothauer delivered a presentation.

Discussion:

- O’Neil asked about setbacks and zoning and why setbacks only appear in zoning.
  - Pfothauer responded with that it should only exist in zoning because this is where dimensions are set.
  - Duff asked about junkyard setbacks with no zoning.
    - Pfothauer agreed that this is an issue.
  - Duff asked about County and State road setbacks
    - Chambers responded there are none
- Fay asked about Massena project on Water St. and what triggered the CPB review.
  - Pfothauer responded that review is 500’ (line of sight) from trigger features, in this case it was NYS Highway 37B.
- Bisonette asked what towns don’t have zoning.
  - Pfothauer responded: Clare, Clifton, Dekalb, Depeyster, Fine, Fowler, Hammond, Hermon, Hopkinton, Lawrence, Lisbon, Macomb, Piercefield, Pitcairn, Rossie, and Russell. Villages: Hammond and Richville
- Shatraw asked about online training.
  - Pfothauer will provide information and shared location on Google Drive.

- *The presentation satisfied .5 hour of the Board's annual four-hour land use training requirement.*

### **III. Public Forum**

- None

### **IV. Project Reviews**

#### **a. Referrals Returned Pursuant to MOU.**

- i. Gouveneur (V): Site Plan, Porter Hardware Storage Building (Small Town Supply).
  - Duff and Gazin said they were concerned with traffic at that site (intersection of Route 11 (W Main st.) and Wall St.).
  - Alan suggested signing for better traffic flow.
  - Duff asked if this project is time sensitive.
  - Bellow suggested returning for local with traffic recommendations.
  - Approved with conditions, signage for right turn only on Rt 11, signage commercial vehicles not allowed to turn on Wall St.
  - Chambers stated that NYS DOT controls signage on state highways.
    - New condition, applicant converse with NYS DOT about signage and traffic impacts (consensus reached).

#### **b. Full Reviews.**

- i. Edwards (T): Special Use Permit for a solar array in the Residential-Agricultural (R-A) zoning district at 1889 County Route 24.  
Pfothauer presented the project review and reviewed staff recommendations.
  - Gazin asked if there is a requirement for immediate neighbors to consume power produced from array.
    - Pfothauer responded that community solar provides the option for neighboring properties to purchase power from the array.
  - Alan asked if site was still active ag.
    - Bisonette confirmed that it is.
  - Alan stated his concern with solar projects consuming prime farmland.
  - O'Neil agreed with Alan and would like to add language from the BOL's resolution addressing solar development and prime farmland. Also, applicants should demonstrate how to avoid prime farmland.
  - Murray said solar consuming prime farmland is now common with SLC solar projects.
    - Pfothauer responded that Town of Edwards' law doesn't mention prime farmland avoidance.
  - Chambers stated that applicant should consult with County Highway Department about access road intersecting with County Route 24.
  - Bisonette asked about siting issues along County Route 24 and access road intersection.
  - Gilbert asked about the continued dilemma about siting solar on prime farmland.

- Rose is concerned if the electrical grid can handle.
  - Gilbert supports Rose's comment about grid limitations.
- Alan recommended the use of other lands (landfills, gravel pits) for solar.
- Duff asked about the prospect of cutting array in half to preserve as much prime farmland as possible.
- Murray is concerned with land grabs for prime farmlands because cost is low when compared to other sites/lands.
- Gazin stated that Town of Edwards might be suited for more power with closure of mine and is concerned about alternative energy when sun and/or wind is not active.
- McCandless (Omni Navitas):
  - Stated that the Edwards community is behind the projects (There is support for more solar projects).
  - Omni was concerned with hydric soils on this site.
  - Land owner is haying the field but not making any money, solar can offset.
  - Omni looked at former mine site.
  - Forest removal and carbon sequestering are minor when compared to the solar power production which will benefit 350-400 homes.
  - Array will not obstruct snowmobile trails.
  - Omni has discussed plan with Edwards Fire.
  - Access road 20' width requirement coming from National Grid ([Electrical System Bulletin \(ESB\) 750](#)).
  - Decommissioning plan costs, Omni supports incorporating salvage value.
  - Land grab comment, Omni took offense to this.
  - Community solar, the public can access via a developer like Omni, National Grid has this option as well.
  - Town of Edwards is working on buying power from community solar arrangement and it will save on their power bill.
  - Omni Navitas is going to submit an app to the SLC IDA in regards to PILOT.
  - Rose asked about 'impact' statement from National Grid and if the grid can't handle the added power from the array, will Omni change array to accommodate this.
    - McCandless responded, yes.
  - Gazin asked about salvage costs in the decommissioning plan and provides an example of a gas station cleanup costs funded by a town.
    - Pfothauer stated other examples.
    - Chambers stated that salvage costs can be very unpredictable and gave an example of electronics and their decreasing salvage value.
    - O'Neil agreed with staff recommendation removing salvage costs.
  - Gilbert provided an agriculture example of neighboring farms in Lawrence actually making it economically viable with preserving prime farmland
    - McCandless responded that that may be the case, however the land owner for this project is pursuing solar.
- The Board approves with conditions (Duff/Shatraw)
 

Opposed: Alan

  - Additional conditions:

- Demonstrate how the development will minimize the displacement of prime farmland.
- Revise access road width to 16', or minimum required by local code, or industry standard, to reduce the amount of land disturbance.
- Secure a highway access permit from the County Highway Department.
- Should National Grid reduce the array size because of grid capacity constraints, prime farmland and forestland should be preserved from array development first.

ii. Lawrence (T): Site Plan Review for a solar array at 409 Ferris Road.

Casserly presented the project review and reviewed staff recommendations.

- Gilbert asked about moving the array into the forest to avoid prime farmland, and how will the board advise on potential forest clearing.
- Duff asked, can layout change to reduce the footprint to avoid forest clearing and covering prime farmland.
  - Alan responded that reducing the array is not economically viable to developers.
  - McCandless responded that wetlands are preventing changing array.
- Murray asked about economies of scale for 5MW solar project.
  - McCandless responded with yes, 5MW is more profitable than smaller arrays.
- O'Neil asked about rent payments to landowners.
  - McCandless responded that payment details are a private arrangement between the developer and landowner.
- Duff asked about information on financial arrangement and if neighboring landowners know about such information.
  - McCandless responded that information was provided to landowners in mailings.
- The Board approves with conditions (O'Neil/Gilbert).  
Opposed E. Alan.
  - Additional conditions:
    - Demonstrate how the development will minimize the displacement of prime farmland.
    - Revise access road width to 16', or minimum required by local code, or industry standard, to reduce the amount of land disturbance.
    - Should National Grid reduce the array size because of grid capacity constraints, prime farmland and forestland should be preserved from array development first.

iii. Lawrence (T): Site Plan Review for 2 solar arrays at 641 Ferris Road (east and west)

Casserly presented the project review and reviewed staff recommendations.

- Rose spoke about her site visit to 637 Ferris Road and suggests the need for more vegetative screening. She also supports not clearing forests to make room for array.
  - McCandless responded that they are considering more screening.
- Gilbert talked about how the CPB consider the recent resolution from the County BOL for avoiding prime farmland for projects like these.
  - O'Neil agreed and to include added conditions from previous projects.
  - Duff and Alan agreed as well.
    - They asked, how best to mitigate the use of prime ag land for solar.
  - Rose is concerned that the local municipality will just overrule CPB conditions.
    - Pfothauer explained how conditions work with local municipalities.
  - Rose expressed her thoughts on solar companies swaying local towns with economic opportunities.
    - O'Neil replied that there are impacts to others as well not just the property owners.
- Alan thanked McCandless for attending and presenting the developer point of view.
  - McCandless provided her contact info: [cory@omni-navitas.com](mailto:cory@omni-navitas.com), (207) 522-5523
- The Board approves with conditions (O'Neil/Duff).  
 Opposed: Alan, Gilbert, Darling.  
 Abstention: Rose.
  - Additional conditions:
    - Demonstrate how the development will minimize the displacement of prime farmland.
    - Revise access road width to 16', or minimum required by local code, or industry standard, to reduce the amount of land disturbance.
    - Should National Grid reduce the array size because of grid capacity constraints, prime farmland and forestland should be preserved from array development first.

iv. Gouverneur (T): Special Use Permit for a 3.5 MW Solar Array in the Intensive Development District at 587 & 599 Rock Island Road (County Route 11).

Pfothauer presented the project review and reviewed staff recommendations.

- Alan asks about confirming if site has no prime farmland.
  - Staff confirms that this is the case.
- Pfothauer expressed that this project is entirely sited on non-prime farmland.
- Alan asked to include the non-binding recommendation that the applicant work with the SLC IDA on a PILOT.
- The Board unanimously approves with conditions (Alan/Bissonette).
  - Additional conditions:
    - Demonstrate how the development will minimize the displacement of prime farmland.
    - Revise access road width to 16', or minimum required by local code, or industry standard, to reduce the amount of land disturbance.

- Should National Grid reduce the array size because of grid capacity constraints, prime farmland and forestland should be preserved from array development first.

#### **IV. Reports**

##### **a. Executive Committee.**

- Murray talked about training, agenda, cell tower project that was RFLA (Returned for Local Action).

##### **b. Board of Legislators (BOL).**

- Fay stated that the BOL in the process of sales tax revenue negotiations and thanked the CPB for continuing to support the avoidance of siting solar on prime farmland.

##### **c. Highway Department.**

- Chambers said all projects are nearing completion.

##### **d. County Roundtable.**

- O'Neil said that the Board should try to further discuss the farmland/forest ideals outside project discussion in monthly board meeting.
  - Rose replied that they should have a discussion before a regularly scheduled meeting.
    - Pfothenauer agreed.
- O'Neil and Rose asked about the balance of solar projects among towns in SLC and what impacts they may have.
- The Board asked about other Omni Navitas projects in SLC and their status.

##### **e. Staff Report.**

- Census, CPO staff is pushing out product and advertising material.
  - Shatraw responded that she has had 4 people at her house after she completed the Census.

#### **V. Other Items**

##### **a. Correspondence.**

- i. Notice from Town of Stockholm about Barton Pitts (Nexamp) project.
- ii. Stockholm billboard use variance, denied based on CPB NOA.
- iii. FERC (Federal Energy Regulatory Commission) letter to the CPO, it was blank.

##### **b. Announcements. None**

- ##### **c. Next Meeting Dates.** The Executive Committee will meet online on September 24<sup>th</sup> at 4:15 pm. The next County Planning Board will be online on October 8<sup>th</sup> at 7:00 pm.

#### **VI. Adjourn**

The meeting adjourned at approximately 10:53 pm (Alan/Rose).

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be "Eric Alan", written in a cursive style.

**Eric Alan, Secretary**

Minutes prepared by Dakota Casserly

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