

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

7:00 p.m., Thursday, October 13, 2022
In person, 49 ½ Court Street, Canton with press on Zoom
Meeting ID: 985 9321 3418
Passcode: 915408

I. Call to Order

- a. **Roll Call and Determination of a Quorum.** O’Neil called the meeting to order at 7:01 pm. A quorum was established.

| | NAME | ABSENT | PRESENT | | NAME | ABSENT | PRESENT |
|-----|------------------------|--------|--------------|--|--|--------|--------------|
| 1. | (Vice-Chair) | | | | Staff: | | |
| 2. | Ken Bellor | | X | | Matilda Larson | | X |
| 3. | Kim Bisonette | X | | | Jason Pfothenauer | | X |
| 4. | Don Chambers | | X | | | | |
| 5. | Priscilla Darling | | X | | Guests: | | |
| 6. | Daniel Fay | X | | | Tom Gaser-NNY Newspapers | | X |
| 7. | Laura Foster | | X | | Rachel Hunter – Gouverneur Tribune Press | | X On Zoom |
| 8. | Andy Gilbert | | X | | Owen Hunter – ForeFront Solar | | X |
| 9. | Dan Huntley | | X | | Christian Schlesinger – ForeFront Solar | | X |
| 10. | Robin McClellan | | X | | | | |
| 11. | Kitty O’Neil (Chair) | | X | | | | |
| 12. | Julia Rose (Secretary) | | X | | | | |
| 13. | Heather Sands | | X | | | | |
| 14. | Cherrie Shatraw | X | | | | | |
| 15. | Vacant | | | | | | |
| | | | 10/15 | | | | |

- b. **Adoption of the Agenda.** Pfothenauer modified the agenda by removing the tentative designation for the Gouverneur Stewart’s shop review. The modified agenda was unanimously adopted (Rose/Gilbert).
- c. **Adoption of the September 8, 2022 Meeting Minutes.** The minutes were unanimously adopted (McClellan/Bellor).

II. Public Forum

None

III. Project Reviews

- a. **Referrals Returned Pursuant to MOU.** Pfothenauer summarized projects in the MOU list, and reviewed staff comments for projects listed in the addendum. There were no questions from the Board.
- b. **Full Reviews**
 - i. Gouverneur (V): Site Plan, Special Use Permit for convenience store with gas pumps at 90 West Main Street in B-1 zoning district. Pfothenauer presented the staff review. A discussion ensued between the Board and Staff about buffering, snow removal, visibility for turning off of Mill Street onto West Main Street, lighting, traffic circulation and access to the site. The Board modified the conditional approval proposed by staff to include consultation with the DOT on circulation and access. A non-binding recommendation of fencing along the property lines that are adjacent to residential uses was added. The Board voted unanimously to approve the site plan and special use permit with conditions (Gilbert/Chambers).
 - ii. Canton (T): Special Use Permit for a 5 MW Solar Array in the Rural Zone at 29 Nickerson Road. Larson presented the project review and staff recommendations. Board members had several concerns about the development. Several questions were asked about wetlands on the site and drainage. Huntley suggested that there were outlets that could accommodate tile drainage. The project is located in Agricultural District 2. Prime soils are present on the site along with prime if drained soils. Rose offered a comment and concern about water run-off from the development. O’Neil stated that this is another example of actively farmed land being taken away from a farm. Darling asked about co-locating sheep on the site. McClellan spoke about research that addresses water impacts and co-location. It was noted by several members that this land is leased as is much land around the County. Gilbert stated that grazing operations are difficult because of the limited local market. Chambers stated that current farm machinery does not fit well between panels as they are currently configured. Huntley discussed the economic leakage that comes as result of a less agricultural land being available. Rose mentioned that prime agricultural land should be equivalent to wetlands with regard to State regulations. Chambers mentioned marginal lands should be used for solar installations. The State should be more aware and engaged in the protection of agricultural land and the importance of colocation. Rose stated that more needs to be done to ensure that screening is adequate and maintained. Further discussion ensued on the importance of screening. Bellor asked what the Staff recommendation was regarding this project. Larson stated denial. O’Neil noted that the prime and prime if drained land exceeded 10% of the parcel and that recently, projects that have exceeded this threshold have been denied and that the Board should be consistent. Huntley asked about substation capacity. The developer stated that an interconnect agreement has been issued. A question about

community solar was asked. The developer stated this facility would allow for local community subscription. O'Neil stated that that is something that should be considered in future projects. Larson noted that the Town of Canton Solar Law gives deference to community solar. Additional questions were asked of the developer regarding landscaping and the Board felt additional screening should be included. O'Neil mentioned the bullet list of review categories that are considered by Staff. It was mentioned that the preservation of prime farmland is the top priority for all reviews. An explanation about how the 10% threshold was developed was shared with the applicant. The Board unanimously voted to deny the Special Use Permit for the 5 MW Solar Array at 29 Nickerson Road (Chambers/Gilbert).

IV. Reports

- a. **Executive Committee.** O'Neil said the Committee met to set the agenda, discuss the full review projects, and projects returned under MOU. She stated that all members are welcome to attend Executive Committee meetings.
- b. **Board of Legislators.** With Fay's absence there was no report.
- c. **Highway Department.** Chambers noted that the bridge on County Route 24 in Pierrepont is now open and the bridge on County Route 37 in the Town of Massena will open in a few weeks. Some top course paving is being wrapped up as well. The Potsdam outpost project is progressing, with walls currently going up. Plans are being put in place for winter maintenance.
- d. **State of the County Roundtable.** Pfothenhauer gave an update on the Northside Solar project. He noted that both the DEC and PCS recommended against granting an appeal and that the project is effectively off the table. However, a new 200 MW project from the developer Boralex is being proposed in Brasher, just north of Helena. Larson mentioned that Boralex presented at the County's Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board and presented its desire to establish a working group to investigate dual solar/agricultural uses. Pfothenhauer also mentioned that a 60 MW project known as Moss River Solar is in the early stages of development in the Town of Dekalb, east of the community of Bigelow.
- e. **Staff Report.** Pfothenhauer mentioned several items that are keeping The County Planning Office busy lately, these include staffing the County Broadband Committee, which is examining ways of allocating APRA funds set aside by the County Board of Legislators, and reviewing water and waste water project applications for other ARPA funds. Staff is also finalizing the new land use regulations for the Town of Rossie. Larson mentioned that she attended a ribbon cutting for a new bus shelter in the Village of Potsdam. She also spoke of a presentation by Cornell Professor Todd Schmitt, who spoke to the County's Ag. Board about the money multiplier effect of agriculture. He stated that it is very complicated to determine the impact of agricultural land coming out of production

as a result of solar installations. O’Neil spoke about economic leakage, or money that used to be spent here on agriculture that is now spent out of the area. Several Board members noted that it would be great to be able to put economic leakage as a negative impact as a result of solar development, but it is difficult to quantify.

V. Other Items

- a. **Correspondence.** Pfothenhauer mentioned a notice from the Adirondack Park Agency regarding a 20 MW solar array in the Town of Clifton. The Agency attached several pages of conditions to its approval. The County Planning Board should see this project at some time in the future. He also mentioned some solar energy training that is being put on by NYSEERDA in the month of November.
- b. **Announcements.** Larson mentioned that Staff will present a training session on Thursday, November 17th in Canton.
- c. **Next meeting dates**
 - i. Executive Committee: Thursday, October 27th. 4:00 pm via Zoom.
 - ii. Planning Board: Thursday, November 10th at 7:00 pm in the 2nd floor conference room of the Public Safety Complex, located at 49 ½ Court Street in Canton.

VI. Adjourn

- a. The meeting adjourned by consensus at 9:30 p.m. (Gilbert/Chambers).

Respectfully Submitted,



Julia Rose, Secretary

Minutes prepared by Jason Pfothenhauer

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