

Town of New Paltz  
Environmental Conservation Board  
March 21, 2018  
Community Center  
7:00pm

Participants: Joe Bergstein, Rose Rudnitski & Janelle Peotter via phone, Ingrid Haeckel, Jim Littlefoot, Susan Wile & Amanda Gotto liaison to town planning board and CWOSP members; Mike Knutson, John Gotto, Cara Lee, Brad Barclay, Lynn Bowdery, secretary, Marty Irwin, Tom Weiner, Richard Fiesel, Kevin Borden, co-chair, Roberta Clements, chair of Gardiner's ECC

Meeting called to order at 7:07pm

Public Comment: None

## SOLAR DISCUSSION

Solar developers are looking for easy developed plots of land. Across NY State, solar is mostly happening on agricultural property. EnCB shares CWOSP concern on how land is to be used for solar purpose, especially large-scale installations. We share basic questions around establishing a law for solar installations and are only addressing photovoltaic systems, referred to as large-scale PV systems. Our focus will be on the impact of medium size systems to the land in New Paltz.

- Do we want to allow very large projects (>25 MW) if they come?
- How large a project do we want?
- Do we want to set a threshold of acreage?
- Where do we want to prevent them? We don't want them in wetlands or floodplains.
- Clearwater Rd. (the location of the Reuse Center) has acreage available with transmission lines for a 20-megawatt system. Developer could set up substation. The key is how to store?
- 1-megawatt system requires 6-8 acres of ground.
- 2-megawatt system requires 15-20 acres maximum.
- Is there a threshold for medium size system to fit in residential neighborhoods?
- We need to be categorical about installations and special use permit conditions.
- New Paltz should provide guidance on what can and should be planted around solar panels, i.e. native grasses that don't require much mowing.
- Decommissioning needs to be highly accountable.
- We can use our zoning map as a guideline

Per Roberta Clements, the Gardiner solar law took guidance from the state and other town laws. Gardiner law doesn't address solar installations for shared use, which are subscription based and up to 2 megawatts. Cooperative usage is considered residential or private use. (We want to encourage this type in New Paltz.) Gardiner's focus is 2-megawatt systems with a 20-acre minimum, which is further reduced by setbacks. Gardiner law mandates a 100-foot setback with screening and fencing to mitigate visual impact. It becomes a 10-acre array. Gardiner law mandates fencing is off the ground with breaks to

allow for wildlife. It is hoped that Gardiner will pass a wetlands and watercourse law to cover other areas. Timber harvesting law covers some clearcutting issues for solar. Gardiner solar law requires a vegetative buffer. Properties can't be contiguous. Layers of review are built into the law with no specific zone, and no specific area off limits except the Ridge where solar is expressly prohibited.

#### NEW PALTZ ZONING:

Special permit guidance needs to be very specific and zoning is key. The Floodway can be prohibited from large scale solar as well as the 100-year floodplain. Beyond these areas:

- Which zoning areas are most appropriate and least appropriate from an environmental and open space standpoint?
- Light industrial on South Putt Rd. appears ideal since water and sewer is already there.
- We should encourage rooftops and parking lots. How do we create incentives for solar on warehouse rooftops?
- Special use permit protection?
- Possible overlay tool with an assessment tool, i.e. a conservation overlay with priority for biodiversity areas and aesthetic priority will aid in determining areas with Habitat Assessment Guidelines also applied.
- Will biodiversity areas match parcel boundaries?
- Consideration made to ecology under the array.
- Do we want giant solar farms? A mix of small, medium and large seems ideal.
- From planning perspective what does full build out look like?
- Currently Central Hudson won't allow much solar on grid until the issue of storage is solved.
- Performance bond and decommissioning are standard.
- The town of Warwick refers to subdivision code to identify primary and secondary conservation areas.

NYSERDA has consultants and guidelines for developing solar regulations to help communities with solar zoning. Enlisting their consultant would help us formulate our law.

#### NEXT STEPS:

Cara Lee will reach out to NYSERDA. Ingrid will send a Doodle poll to see who's available for next meeting. Does it warrant a subcommittee? Yes – those attending Scenic Hudson conference next week on sustainable solar in the HV.

ENCB MEETING called to order at 8:25pm

Rose and Janelle are now official members. Joe makes motion to accept minutes with minor amendment. Six members affirm.

No new planning board projects.

#### TRAFFIC STUDY:

- Christopher Marx, Highway Superintendent and Jim analyzed traffic on North Putt Rd. on 4-6 separate occasions including late afternoon and early morning. Traffic back up at the intersection of 299 consists of 20-30 vehicles from the light with the light timed differently for rush hour and non-rush hour periods.
- Over a period of 17 days, Shiverstown Rd. had over 50,000 vehicles. Most come from the north heading south. This averaged 2,968 vehicles per day. Total vehicles on both sides of the road was 50,456.
- Horsenden Rd. averages 1,707 vehicles per day.
- With the addition of blacktop from CVS, and vehicles idling at the light, the corner of N. Putt and 299 will become a pollution hot spot. One car idling 10 minutes produces 200 pounds of carbon dioxide. For better traffic flow, Chris suggests adding another lane on the right side of N. Putt to allow vehicles to make the turn onto 299. The Ulster County Conservation board will support this and Jim will draft a letter. The Gateway committee discussed creating 35-foot vegetative buffer here.

#### SUNY PARKING LOT UPDATE:

- Per Ingrid, for the health of the Saw Mill Brook, SUNY has agreed to remove 15 parking spaces at the end of the lot, which will widen the vegetative buffer to 50+ feet. The narrowest buffer will be 35 feet. The plan is for the entire lot to be porous.
- Ingrid has requested that plans be shared, but has received nothing to date.
- Once weather gets warm, a stream walk with John Shupe (VP of Facilities) is planned to walk the length of the brook through campus and discuss opportunities to support its health.
- If SUNY has a Town and Gown committee, EnCB should be represented, or establish a liaison with SUNY to keep EnCB up to date.
- Rose volunteers to write letter to New Paltz Times from EnCB members to advise public of SUNY's willingness to do the right thing environmentally and raise public awareness of small streams.

#### PLASTIC BAN:

- The County is working on a plastic bag resolution. Joe has been coordinating with Laura DeNey on this issue. Dan Torres recommends if EnCB is pro-ban that we draft letter to the town board. Another area for the ban is the use of plastic straws, which are no longer in use at Lagusta's, Moxie cupcake, the Mudpuddle and Karma Road. Joe will prepare a letter for town board that EnCB is supportive of bag ban.

#### GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE:

- Meeting held March 9, with 15 sites proposed in feasibility study. Selected sites will be narrowed to 3 of the most public places in the community so that public can see the effectiveness of GI. The potential exists for collaboration with SUNY and the town in the area near the fire department. Other sites are Church and N. Front St. and Southside Ave and the base of Henry Dubois near Route 32. A community workshop on GI is planned April 4<sup>th</sup> to familiarize the public with GI.

#### MISCELLANEOUS:

- Ingrid suggests creating a subcommittee to work on a conservation overlay and green procurement.
- Joe found 6 different items the town is purchasing to be replaced by green products, and perhaps work with other municipalities to buy in bulk.
- Janelle would like to find intersection of EnCB with sustainable community Climate Smart Communities. Village Hall April 5<sup>th</sup> meeting at 2:30.

Joe motions to adjourn meeting 9:19pm.