

**MINUTES OF THE PLANNING BOARD WORKSHOP OF JANUARY 30, 2017
AT THE JESSE SMITH LIBRARY COMMUNITY ROOM
SUBJECT TO APPROVAL AT THE NEXT REGULAR MEETING**

I. CALL TO ORDER:

Meeting was called to order at 7:03 p.m., Jeffrey Partington, Chairman, presiding.

Members Present were: Jeffrey Partington, Mark Tremblay, Bruce Ferreira, Christopher Desjardins and Jeffrey Presbrey.

Members Absent were: Dov Pick, Michael Lupis, Leo Felice and Robert Woods

Others Present were: Christopher Kearns, Office of Energy Resources, Attorney Robert Mitson, and Christine Langlois, Deputy Planner.

II. ATTENDANCE REVIEW:

Mr. Partington acknowledged that Mr. Pick, Mr. Lupis, Mr. Felice and Mr. Woods were excused.

III. WORKSHOP SESSION: Continued Discussions & Recommendation to Town Council on Revisions to the Zoning Ordinance dealing with Ground-Mounted Solar Photovoltaic Installations: *Section 30-211. Ground Mounted Solar Photovoltaic Installations and Section 30-71. Zoning District Uses, Section 4. Public and semipublic uses: (17) Solar photovoltaic installations. Section 25 Taxation (cont'd from 12/05/2016 and 01/09/2017 meetings:* Having received a copy of the draft changes to the Town's Zoning Ordinance on Ground Mounted Solar Photovoltaic Installations, Mr. Kearns pointed out areas of concerns with the changes as outlined by a colleague from his office. He noted that there are basically three categories defined by State law: installations that are used to offset a residence electrical bill; installations that elect to offset the residence electrical bill with a small portion being sold back to the public provider (the amount sold back determined by the property owner based on the size of the installation); installations that strictly sell power (100% generated) back to the public provider. This can be defined within the *Definitions* of small and large installations. Under the *General Requirements*, he cautioned the requirement allowing the Board to review every proposed solar installation as outlined in (1). Chairman Partington said that the review process is being proposed for the zones which are designated for solar installations. In regards to *Required Documents*, Mr. Kearns noted that his colleague had suggested against requiring "an operation and maintenance plan" as he stated that it was too early in the process to request this from a developer. These plans are usually provided once the project is completed. In regards to *Performance Standards*, the height restriction of 12 feet was questioned and can prove to be restrictive to systems that are being proposed within the farming district. Also, the requirement that the larger solar installation, with a setback requirement of 200 feet from any roadway, puts a burden on the installation with the power interconnection. He suggested more flexibility with the underground requirement for the distribution lines. Under *Utility Notification*, he stated that because of the costs involved with these installations, the developer would need to get a general consensus that the projects would be permitted with the town prior to committing the funds. The interconnect fees for some of the projects run between \$10,000 and \$20,000 along with a bond deposit to secure the state project in which they will participate in. One of National Grid's requirements is site control. Under *Abandonment or decommissioning*, he noted that it lists the removal of transmissions lines, adding that the transmission lines are owned by the utility company.

Chairman Partington said that he believed the language addressed the connection lines between the solar panels. Mr. Kearns said that some clarification would be needed. A suggestion was “customer-owned equipment”. He offered further information on a new program being offered this spring called the Community Remote Net Reaching, that provides solar power, off site, to a group of homes that does not have land, or proper solar exposure directly within the development.

Attorney Mitson then asked Mr. Kearns to address the State’s position on installations for open space and farmlands where development rights have been sold. Mr. Kearns said that the position of the Office of Energy Resources and the Department of Environmental Management is that any farmlands that have entered into Conservation Easements should not have solar development on them as public funds were utilized for these easements. He noted that these arrangements are currently under discussion by DEM, and other agencies, regarding the legal issues.

Discussions continued as to whether the Board should consider drafting changes based on the lot size versus the solar installation size. Mr. Kearns said that sites would determine the characteristics and the size of the installation. The number 250 KW is mentioned often as it is tied to a specific program. The ordinance could be designed to address small solar (50 KW to 500 KW) and large solar (anything else). Chairman Partington suggested percentage as another way to define the size. The Board expressed the desire to create an ordinance that would meet the changing technology needs while preserving the ability for businesses to continue to expand and create job opportunities within the Town.

IV. MOTION TO ADJOURN:

A motion to adjourn was then made by Mr. Tremblay 8:14 p.m. The motion received a second from Mr. Desjardins and carried unanimously by the Board.

Recorded by: _____
M. Christine Langlois, Deputy Planner