

Conway Planning Board
Thursday, February 3, 2022

Location: Meeting conducted remotely, Zoom

Members present: Bill Moebius, Jennifer Mullins, Joe Strzegowski (associate member), George Forcier, Chair Beth Girshman. **Absent:** Susan Fentin

Public attendees: Gerry LeBlanc, Devlin Selman, Alice Vigiliani, all residents of Main Poland Road, Conway

Meeting opened at 7:03 p.m.

Minutes of January 20, 2022, meeting approved, contingent on minor modification proposed by Beth. Jennifer Mullins abstained because she was absent from that meeting.

NexAmp – It was noted that NexAmp solar array neighbor Gerry LeBlanc has received a copy of Eversource’s response to the Planning Board’s letter of concern about neighbors experiencing strange harmonics in their homes apparently caused by the solar array and transmitted through power lines. Joe says the array equipment is still off (which ended the harmonic noise) and NexAmp and Eversource are still working on the problem.

The temporary construction sign at the site has been removed, it was noted.

NexAmp neighbor Devlin Selman sent an email to the Planning Board, asking for revisions to the town’s solar bylaw. Board members who have been deeply involved in developing the current solar bylaw, revised June 2021 believe that state regulations for solar arrays are in flux and that trying to amend the bylaw at present might be bad timing and unnecessary, given the time and effort that would be involved. Joe noted that the current bylaw special permit feature allows the board to adjust to a range of contingencies and circumstances without necessarily modifying the bylaw.

Beth noted that residents who want to change the bylaw have the option to submit citizen petitions to put the issue before Town Meeting directly. Beth also noted that any change made locally must be approved by the Attorney General.

No vote taken.

Flood plain bylaw revision. Still some work to be done on the revisions required to make property owners eligible for federal flood insurance, but Beth reported she and George are making good progress with Franklin Regional Council of Governments planning staff. Beth will speak with Town Administrator and Selectboard whether and how the town should increase its zoning violation penalty from a “very low” \$50 per violation. A public information session on the flood plain revision is still slated for March 17, with a public hearing on May 12.

Administrative Assistant. The board is still looking for a part-time administrative assistant, which could be shared with other boards and the town of Ashfield, who are also seeking such help.

River corridor overlay zoning. An information session on Zoom tentatively slated for March 3 during a regular Planning Board meeting.

Cell tower proposal. Discussion about a possible cell phone tower proposal. An application from Vertex Tower Assets is slated to arrive Feb. 7, which sets Planning Board review process in motion.

Board consensus was to ask applicant's lawyer, Francis Parisi, to attend board's Feb. 17 meeting and at that time to schedule a visual (balloon) demonstration of proposed cell tower height.

Board also agreed it would make sense to hire a consultant (at applicant's expense) to assess whether the proposed tower fills a gap in the cell coverage along Route 116. A target of March 24 for a public hearing was agreed upon, with the possibility of a joint session with the Zoning Board of Appeals, from which the applicant is also seeking a permit.

New Business/Public comments. Alice Vigliani and Devlin Semlin both expressed general unhappiness about commercial solar arrays. Vigliani, noting a cell tower also is proposed for their area, said she feels the Poland area is a proving ground for evolving technologies. She seemed to support Devlin's idea of modifying the solar bylaw, saying it should be an evolving document as the town learns from its experiences like the harmonics noise from NexAmp.

Devlin argued her proposed solar bylaw changes are needed because, for example, large-scale solar arrays pose a threat to the environment, by, she said, emitting large amounts of heat. She said there have been few studies done on this and advocated requiring heat monitors at solar farms. She characterized solar array construction as clear-cutting forest to make way for industrial "ovens."

Adjourned at 8:24. Bill moved, Jen seconded. Voted unanimously.