

Conway Planning Board
Thursday, February 17, 2022

Location: Meeting conducted remotely, Zoom

Members present: Bill Moebius, Jennifer Mullins, George Forcier, Chair Beth Girshman, Joe Strzegowski (associate member) (Susan Fentin absent with leave)

Meeting convened at 7:08 p.m.

From the public, in attendance: Jody Lally of Academy Hill Road.

Minutes of Feb. 3 unanimously approved, contingent on absence of Susan Fentin to be noted.

Nexamp: It was noted that the board has received an email from Ethan Gyles of Nexamp, the developer of the solar farm at 2394 Main Poland Road, about a commentary that appeared in the Greenfield Recorder editorial page recently in which a neighbor of the project expressed concern about lack of research on potential environmental harm posed by large-scale solar farms like the one in Conway.

Joe notes that Nexamp is still working to resolve concerns raised by neighbors, is taking the concerns seriously and sees an urgency to solving the problem of undue harmonics in the local electrical services. Testing was done last Thursday, and Nexamp is analyzing the data.

Flood plain bylaw revision: Beth notes she is still waiting to hear back from consultants at the Franklin Regional Council of Governments to make final proposed alterations. She also said we hope to find out by the end of the month if we will get technical assistance grants to pay for more FRCOG help on flood plan and river overlay zoning projects

Beth has also been talking with Town Administrator Veronique Blanchard about what will be involved in adding to her job the role of flood plain administrator, as envisioned in the proposed flood plain revisions. Also, Beth and the administrator need to develop a checklist for those who want to do construction in a flood plain.

The bylaw revision public hearing is slated for March 17.

Administrative assistant search: Still looking for administrative help, as a prospect changed her mind after being offered the part-time job shared with the town's Conservation Commission. The administrative duties are being split among several town hall employees and board members for now.

Vertex cell tower: Application packets for a cell tower off 1356 Ashfield Road (Route 116) arrived Monday. The application by Vertex Tower Assets of Wrentham is to improve wireless communication along the Route 116 corridor between Routes 5 and 10 and Route 112. The proposed 156-foot tower will need Planning Board approval and a Zoning Board of Appeals variance from town tower height limit of 120 feet.

Dates and times are to be scheduled at the board's March 3 meeting for visual demonstrations of the tower's height and location, using balloons. A Vertex

representative will be invited to attend that meeting. A public hearing on the cell tower proposal has been tentatively scheduled for April 7 and might involve the ZBA at the same time.

Joe noted that the town clerk will distribute hard copies of the application to various boards. Joe said a quick look at the application suggests the applicant under-calculated the application fee by neglecting to include the area of undisturbed land to be developed into an access road. Vertex has sent the town \$300. For this reason, while the application was formally accepted, it appears technically to be incomplete at this time.

Joe also noted the quarter-mile driveway up a mountainside was quite steep and could pose significant stormwater management issues. The board accepted his suggestion to hire a consultant to assess that aspect of the plan.

The application is available on the town website and a paper copy is available for public view at the town clerk's office.

The Zoning Board of Appeals chair is interested in attending the March 3 meeting when balloon test times will be set. While Vertex has suggested one test day, at Beth's instigation, the board concluded that three different days might be better for the public. Joe said the proposal may also have wetlands issues that would interest the Conservation Commission, who will be invited to the March 3 meeting as well.

The board (Jennifer, Bill, Beth, George) authorized Beth to reach out to two cell tower consultants, and Joe to engineering consultants Tighe and Bond to see if they could help on the project. While the board chooses and hires the consultants, their fees come from the applicant.

River corridor overlay zoning work has been put off until summer because the cell tower application has crowded the board's agenda.

Other business: Joe said the slate for Feb. 28 town caucus listed the seat George has been filling, by temporary appointment, as a 2-year-term rather than 3 years. It has been changed by the town clerk, thus maintaining staggered terms on the five-member board.

Associate members:

A brief discussion about Planning Board associate members was triggered by presence of Jody Lally, who has expressed interest in being an associate member for special projects.

Joe has filled such a role on the board on the Nexamp project and also volunteered to do the same for Vertex if Susan Fentin, the board's fifth regular member, isn't available when that hearing begins.

Associate members can only vote on matters for which they are assigned by the chair.

By way of introduction, Lally said she has lived in town for four years, this being the first time she has lived in a small town. She has studied social work and psychology, and received a master's degree in urban and environmental planning. During the past 15 years she has been at the UMass Amherst Wind Energy Center in the College of Engineering. In her lifetime, she said, she has lived in places as varied as Tokyo, Hawaii, North Carolina, Munich, New York City, London, and most recently the Boston area.

No action was taken at this time, although Beth and Lally plan to continue their discussions.

The meeting adjourned at 8:20. Voted unanimously.