

Conway Planning Board
Thursday, March 3, 2022
Location: Meeting conducted remotely via Zoom

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

Others present: Vertex Tower Assets attorney Francis D. Parisi; Ashfield Planning Board member Robert Cherdack.

Meeting convened at 7:08 p.m. (Bill arrived 7:15)

Minutes of Feb. 17 meeting approved. (Beth, George, Jennifer)

Nexamp: Summary given of latest letter from Nexamp representative Jaymie Stanton about continuing effort by the solar farm developer and Eversource to find source of harmonics noise bothering Poland area neighbors. Nexamp has ruled out more obvious possible causes and performing deeper analysis. The letter reads:

“As a follow up to the testing performed at the Main Poland Rd solar site, the acoustics testing did confirm the presence of audible noise ~5kHz. This doesn’t provide any immediate resolution but we have validated the existence of this abnormality. To this end we have engaged a 3rd party engineering firm with specialized experience conducting electrical testing and grid-scale modeling in New England. To date we have ruled out any simple, clear-cut issues and we expect to have results of the deeper analysis within the next 3 weeks. Nexamp will discuss re-activating the system with Eversource as soon as we have arrived at a solution we are confident will not negatively impact abutters.”

Floodplain bylaw revision: Beth reported that consultants from the Franklin Regional Council of Governments will lead a public information session on the final draft at the beginning of the Planning Board’s March 17 (Zoom) meeting. A formal public hearing is scheduled for Thursday, May 12 in anticipation of Annual Town Meeting on June 4.

The board discussed whether the fine for floodplain violations should be the same as for zoning bylaw violations in general. Joe argued against a one-size-fits-all approach on fines. Floodplain draft will include a \$300 per violation fine, while the general fine for zoning violations is currently \$50.

Vertex cell tower: Dates were set for a public hearing, May 10. Final dates not yet confirmed for visibility demonstrations for a proposed cell tower off 1356 Ashfield Road (Route 116). Vertex Tower Assets of Wrentham seeks to improve wireless communication along the Route 116 corridor between Routes 5 and 10 and Route 112 with a 150-foot tower (plus 6-foot lightning rod).

The tower requires a Planning Board special permit, and a Zoning Board of Appeals variance from town tower height limit of 120 feet.

The visual demonstration of the tower's height and location, using balloons, will be scheduled for two successive days for six hours each, in late April or early May, with rain dates. The exact times, when arranged by Vertex lawyer Parisi, will be advertised in the *Greenfield Recorder*, *Conway Currents* and on the town website. Parisi originally offered a single two-hour test, but the board sought the more extensive visibility demonstration.

The public hearing, likely to be a hybrid in-person/online format, has been scheduled for May 10 at 7 p.m. Joe Strzegowski has been appointed as an associate member for this project in lieu of Susan Fentin, who is on leave.

The board and the Vertex lawyer also discussed hiring consultants to analyze technical aspects of the project.

The board agreed to seek a quote from Fred R. Goldstein of Interisle Consulting Group LLC of Hopkinton to review the developer's analysis of radio signal coverage and other aspects of the proposal to determine how well it would fill gaps in cell coverage between Burkeville and Ashfield.

While the town hires the consultant, Vertex pays for the cost. Parisi would like the consultant hired soonest so his information can be available at the public hearing. Beth, who reached out to two consultants, said one did not respond, but she noted that the town used Goldstein on a recent similar Vertex tower south of downtown off Route 116, with good results.

Parisi was less enthusiastic about hiring a second consultant to analyze the runoff and drainage impact of the tower's access driveway, which Joe described as having very steep grades. Parisi said Vertex builds on steep locations all the time and that the driveway was well designed for the light use an "unmanned facility" would get. (The application envisions occasional maintenance visits). He said having to pay for two consultants felt "exceptionally expensive and burdensome."

The board asserted it is prudent to review the driveway designs nonetheless, because as Beth noted, whatever impact it has on its surroundings will persist for years. Beth also noted there were nearby wetlands and the project might interest the Conservation Commission, although Parisi said Vertex designers avoided wetlands so they wouldn't have to involve the Conservation Commission. The impression was left that he would check further about the wetlands and the commission.

For now, it was agreed Joe will get a quote from engineering consultants Tighe and Bond so the board will know better how much it would cost to get its help on the project.

Parisi would like the Planning Board and the ZBA to hold a joint hearing to streamline permitting. There were no ZBA representatives at the meeting, so Beth will contact that board.

In response to a question from George about the tower's height, Parisi said the structure itself was proposed to be 150 feet but would also have a 6-foot lightning rod above that for a total of 156 feet.

Marder query: Beth noted that an inquiry from Efrem Marder of Cemetery Hill Road had been addressed when she provided him with basic information about special permits and variances in connection with a proposed connecting structure between a non-conforming barn and a studio on his property. No action needed.

No action required or taken about next steps open cannabis bylaw revisions and river overlay bylaw.

Adjourned at 8:13. Unanimous.