

**TOWN OF NEW BALTIMORE PLANNING BOARD**

**Regular Monthly Meeting**

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The Regular Monthly Meeting was called to order by Vice Chair Ann Marie Vadney at 7:25 p.m. followed by the Pledge of Allegiance. Other Board Members in attendance were Jean Horn, Rob Van Etten and Pat Bruno. Absent were Chair Kathy Rundberg, Joe Caputo and Bob Court. Also in attendance was former backup CEO Steve Mantor who had just been appointed as CEO replacing Gordon Pebler earlier in the week. Mr. Mantor had come to the meeting to introduce himself to the Planning Board and to offer his assistance when needed.

**OLD BUSINESS**

**Lands of Lauren Hallock – Minor Subdivision Application**

The Public Hearing on this Minor Subdivision Application was held just prior to the start of this meeting. Mr. Hallock's authorized representative, Ted Hilscher, remained present. Being no further discussion on the application, resolution was put forth as follows:

**WHEREAS**, Lauren Hallock wishing to complete a minor subdivision of property owned at 3797 County Route 51, had his authorized representative submit a Minor Subdivision Application to the Planning Board at the March 10, 2016, Planning Board Meeting; and

**WHEREAS**, required Public Hearing, having been duly noticed, was held on April 14, 2016, with members of the Public offering no comment; and

**WHEREAS**, the Short Environmental Assessment Form was reviewed, now therefore be it

**RESOLVED**, the application be granted a negative declaration for purposes of SEQRA; and further

**RESOLVED**, that the Lauren Hallock minor subdivision application be approved with no conditions.

Moved by: Horn

Seconded by: Bruno

AYES: Horn; Vadney; Van Etten; Bruno

NAYS: None

ABSTAINED: None

ABSENT: Rundberg, Caputo, Court

Upon receipt of mylar, maps will be stamped and signed and returned to applicant for filing.

**NEW BUSINESS** - None

**MINUTES**

It was moved by Bruno and Seconded by Horn to approve the minutes of the February 11, 2016, Regular Monthly Meeting as presented.

AYES: Horn; Vadney; Van Etten; Bruno

NAYS: None

ABSTAINED: None

ABSENT: Rundberg, Caputo, Court

It was moved by Horn and Seconded by Van Etten to approve the minutes of the March 10, 2016, Mack Minor Subdivision Public Hearing as presented.

AYES: Horn; Vadney; Van Etten; Bruno

NAYS: None

ABSTAINED: None

ABSENT: Rundberg, Caputo, Court

It was moved by Van Etten and seconded by Bruno to approve the minutes of the March 10,

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2016, Regular Monthly Meeting as presented.

AYES: Horn; Vadney; Van Etten; Bruno

NAYS: None

ABSTAINED: None

ABSENT: Rundberg, Caputo, Court

**CORRESPONDENCE**

1. 3/16/2016 memo from Greene County Economic Development, Tourism & Planning re: Notice of Recording of Subdivision Plats filed for months of December, 2015 thru February, 2016.
2. From Greene County Economic Development, Tourism & Planning, Notice of May 25, 2016 Training.
3. Return of Greene Form for Mack Map Filing.
4. Building Permit Applications for: 1 Farm Building Renovations; 1 Septic Tank Replacement; 1 Rooftop Solar, 1 Garage; 1 Aboveground Swimming Pool; 1 telecommunications facility upgrade

In response to question regarding tower location, it was noted it is the tower located on Tower Road and is just an upgrade to provide faster service.

5. 3/21/2016 Notice from Cary Institute of Ecosystem Studies of 5/7/2016 Forum on the future of oak forests.

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

Mrs. Alfeld raised question regarding the tower located on the Paul Schiller property that is for sale and she was advised that that tower is located on its own parcel.

All Board Members had received a copy of the sample legislation for the regulation and approval standards for **solar collection systems** prepared for another Town which had been received by the Town Board from the Attorney for the Town.

Ms. Horn commented that it appeared to cover everything that would be needed but she did question if there was the need for an 8-foot high fence around a **solar farm** located out in the country. She cited expense of such a fence, would it be necessary out in the country and noted that fences often are not maintained and become dilapidated. It was felt it might be site specific. On further referring to the sample legislation, it was noted that "it shall have at a minimum of an 8-foot security fence". There is no option.

Mr. Mantor advised the Board that the fence is really two-fold.

...It is to protect the equipment which is very expensive.

...It is to prevent people from getting hurt.

A solar farm is not electrically a very safe place. As long as there is light on, light on the panels, there is high voltage being generated and being transferred around in there. The only place that the voltage and transfer output begins to become safe is when it gets to the terminus of the farm and goes up into the wiring system. Usually there is a large double transformer there and the sub-station that connects the farm to the grid. You have to think of it as an analogous to a high voltage substation. You see a high voltage substation. It has a nice high fence around it. That is really the parallel that you have to look at there.

Ms. Vadney pointed out that she thought the Board needed to understand a lot more about a solar farm. It is apparently a lot different than what someone puts on their house or next door to their house. Mr. Mantor continued the magnitude of voltage and amperage is significantly higher. The things, even though they are on the house, we are going to be looking at from my minor perspective here:

...Making sure they are properly labeled.

...That the fire department is notified.

There are separate and unique safety issues even with the solar panels on the roof of a house. Essentially,

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what you are looking at for a solar farm is it is making a lot of amps, a lot of kilowatts and its analogous to the hazards of a sub-station even though you don't have the big wires coming in above and going back out. You have a lot of kilowatts being generated and it has to be connected to the grid.

Question was raised if a deer was by one of those panels would it get electrocuted. Mr. Mantor explained a deer could do a lot of damage and would most likely get electrocuted. It is fenced more to keep people from getting in there. It was noted the deer was being used as an analogy that we can relate to and understand. If a deer could get electrocuted, a kid playing in the field could get electrocuted not from the panels but from the connections that are routed along the base to the spine of the thing.

Reference was made to the solar farm near the Owens-Corning Plant. Each of those rows has an electrical conduit spine which goes to a junction box. Some of them have an inverter which is another way of dealing with the voltage but each of those spines is a high voltage wire essentially, they come together, are joined and the voltage is stepped up. If someone touched the panels, they would not get electrocuted. They are not open like that. If they started tampering with the conduits and the connections, that is when they would get hurt.

Ms. Vadney commented that everyone needs to study this further before further discussion. Ms. Horn commented that she had studied it and pointed out that it lays out the rules and regulations for both residential and for the solar farms. It is pretty comprehensive and perhaps with just a few changes could work well for our Town. With the discussion held tonight, the reason(s) for the fence requirement makes good sense.

Mr. Mantor advised the Board that he had had a chance to read it over. It is very comprehensive and just needs consideration given to the fee(s) to go along with it. There is a lot more review that has to take place, dealing with the engineers, and things like that than there is for the smaller panels that you see put on a roof.

It was noted that it is the Town Board that would be putting the solar legislation in place and Ms. Vadney suggested that the Planning Board Members review it thoroughly for further discussion when all the Planning Board Members are present and have had a chance to read these minutes which includes Mr. Mantor having answered the Board's questions and provided clarification with regard to issues. Ms. Horn advised that she didn't know when the Town Board was going to bring it up and that they may not rule on it right away. The Clerk pointed out they will have to have a Public Hearing on it as well.

Town resident, Ellie Alfeld, stressed that the Town wants to be sure that the fees that will be charged will be sufficient to cover the inspections, etc. Ms. Horn pointed out since other Towns have already done this, there isn't a reason for us to reinvent the wheel. We can look at the other Towns, what they have done, what they have had problems with, what they have not had problems with, learn from them and base our legislation on what they have done.

Ms. Vadney expressed concern regarding the landowner who leases his/her property being responsible for any removal. She was advised that it is all spelled out in the legislation, including the required posting of surety for removal of any abandoned system.

Question was raised regarding the chemicals contained in one of these. Mr. Mantor explained nothing is going to leak out. They are pretty much solid state. It was further questioned if they were to leak? Mr. Mantor explained there is nothing to leak. They are plastic. There might be issues at the plant where they are made but the end product is plastic. There is nothing to leak out or leach into the ground and cause a problem. When the panels are disposed of, it is pretty much industrial waste, can be ground up and put in a landfill.

Question was raised as to how the increased value and increased taxes would be handled with a person leasing property for a solar farm to be sited. It was assumed that that would be part of the landowner's negotiation and lease with the solar farm company, as it is with cell towers. It was noted that while leasing is more common, there could be instances where the property would be purchased outright.

The life of the panels is between 15 and 18 years and then they have to be changed out and new ones

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installed. Technology may well change during the life of the panels.

It was noted that the word "farm" should appear in quotes since these "farms" are not what we would generally consider a farm in this area but rather are a commercial entity, an industrial electrical land facility.

**ADJOURNMENT**

At 7:50 p.m., it was moved by Horn and seconded by Bruno to adjourn the meeting.

Ayes: 4    Nays: 0    Abstained: 0    Absent: 3

mbl