

Town of Charlemont
Planning Board Minutes
Hawlemont School, July 16, 2009

Members present : Kathryn Eichholz, Gisela Walker, Dan Miller, Jerry Pratt, Trevor Mackie. Absent : Bill Stephens

7:05 PM: Meeting called to order. Gisela Walker opened for the Board the continuation of the hearing on the wind turbine to be installed at Berkshire East. She reviewed the information that was available from the first hearing for people who had not been there and also explained that the site visit went smoothly.

The Board asked SED for a discussion of the height and placement of the turbine. SED explained that there are very technical reasons for the placement and that it would be financially prohibitive to change. The PB also asked whether the height was fixed or could it be changed.

Dan Miller thanked the SED for the trip to Jiminy Peak, stressing that it was a good comparison to the project at hand.

The PB opened the discussion for comments from the audience. Ray Purington, Maurine Flaherty, Helen Carcio, Tom Campbell, Ray Willis, Jim Garepy, Gary Benedetti, Bill Harker, Mark Allman, Lynne Schulda and Chris Lawless all made general statements in support of the wind turbine.

Ellen Landauer quoted a variety of MDs regarding the possible bad health effects of wind turbines – shadow flicker, strobing and vibration in the ground among the list.

John Atwater felt it would be unpleasant to look at the turbine and an eyesore.

Gloria Jean Purinton asked whether the turbine would be very noisy? SED responded that it does make some sound, but unless you are very close, it won't be heard. Ellen Landauer commented that the sound may be of a low frequency, which can cause problems. SED said that the turbine will be more than 3000 ft away from any dwellings, which is the required distance for safety.

Ellen Landauer, who also stated her concern for the turbine's impact on the local scenic beauty, worried that BE is being paid to place it there. SED responded that it is a private single turbine, initiated by BE , whose main purpose is to save costs at the mountain.

Jim Schaefer spoke in favor of wind energy as a cleaner way of producing energy than coal plants.

Bill Coli, who echoed the support of BE in its search for energy, wondered if it could be smaller. Jim Schaefer responded that there are large fluctuations both in power usage and output at the mountain, so they need to hedge their power. BE needs this size turbine to

be economically viable. The turbine has a pay back period of 10 years, which is a cost that the ski area can deal with. A 600 kw turbine is only 15% smaller than a 900 kw version, which can provide 100% more power than the 600 kw. It is the smallest direct drive turbine BE can buy – they don't want to maintain costly gear boxes. BE is trying to size a turbine that will cover needs, and will also provide power in the long run.

Jerry Pratt wondered about the specifics of the hedge. Jim explained that BE went to a generator of electricity to lock in a lower price 5 years ago. To stay competitive, they must expand the ski area.

Norma Coli had a question on balloon test. With all the historic sites in town, she felt that an analysis of the balloon test re the impact of the turbine on the historical landscape should be prepared by a qualified preservation consultant. Trevor Mackie stated that BE will have to go to the state preservation board (MA Historical commission) too. SED explained that it will provide the historical commission with any information it needs.

Jerry Pratt stated that he felt that someone moved the stone marking the border by the turbine site. Roy Schaefer disagreed and there was some confusion.

Trevor Mackie motioned to continue the hearing to Aug 6th, Gisela Walker seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Next two PB meetings are scheduled for Aug 6 and 20th. The PB agreed to meet also on the 23rd.

Trevor Mackie motioned that PB phone recording be discontinued; Jerry Pratt seconded. The motion passes 4-1, Gisela Walker against.

There is an inquiry from Tax assessors about the new tax maps available – does the PB want copies? Gisela will check into this.

There is an all board meeting Sept 17.

There is a discussion of a change of property of Roger King from 1 to 2 bedrooms, which should have had a building permit. The PB felt that the BOH was dealing with it.

The PB received a letter from the BOH, about a change of use from single family to commercial lodging house for Blue Heron Farm. There is some confusion as to whether they are a motel or a vacation rental house. The Colis explained that to make all the changes necessary for this reclassification (insurance, water use DEP, wheel chair accessible, etc.) would be a financial hardship. The PB would like to see a plot plan of the buildings. The PB will review this.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:45PM

