

MINUTES OF THE PLANNING BOARD PUBLIC HEARING

TOWN OF CHARLEMONT

10/15/2009

Members Present:

Gisela Walker, Co-Chair

Dan Miller

Jerry Pratt

Trevor Mackie

Kathy Eicholz, Associate

Also in attendance were: David Strong and Kevin Schulty of SED, Roy Schaefer and Jim Schaefer; Applicant, Christopher Loftus; Bambi Miller; Charlemont Historical Commission and members of the public.

Walker called the meeting to order at 7:05 P.M. and discussed a proposal she had received from the Mass Audubon Society regarding a comprehensive post installation avian monitoring study; she also cited an avian impact study done by the Mass. Maritime Academy that showed that only about 2 birds per year were affected by turbines.

Bambi Miller read a letter from the Charlemont Historical Commission, dated 10/12/09, which stated that the Commission is not against the turbine proposal, but did have concerns that it compromised the integrity of the Scenic Byway, and adversely affected the view shed from historic sites. The Commission suggested co-locating the turbine to where the Homeland Security communication tower already exists, and suggested lowering the height by 80-100 feet.

Walker asked of the applicants if this would be possible. The applicants stated that it would not as the location of the Homeland Security tower is in Hawley and would be too close to ski trails.

Walker asked of the applicants again if they could consider lowering the tower by 80-100 feet, as suggested by the Historical Commission. The applicants explained that the project needs to meet the 26% capacity factor in order to be financially feasible and productive, and the 50 meter (smaller) tower dropped below this percentage, so they went to the 75 meter (higher) tower. Discussion ensued, with (Dan) Miller saying that the smaller tower was not that much less of a capacity factor and also costs less to build, and that he feels the proposed height (300 feet) is too much. The applicants maintained that the loss in revenue (\$30,000 to 40,000) would be too great to make the project financially feasible; that the visible impact would not be significant enough to warrant going to a smaller turbine, that this is the height recommended by the manufacturer with regard to the blades being otherwise too close to the tree level and related turbulence; (Jim) Schaefer went on to say that the first 7-8 years this turbine will not make money at all Walker also felt that lowering the turbine by 80 feet or so would not have much impact on the view as it still would be a very large structure, and that if the project is going in, it should make as much power as possible . Miller disagreed; stating that he felt bringing it

down 80 feet would take care of all the issues. None of the other Board members expressed support for lowering the turbine.

Miller raised the issue of the impact on property taxes. Schulte gave him a report by National Data that shows that Property values in and around wind turbines were not negatively affected, and that Berkshire East, being the largest employer in Charlemont, has a positive effect on property values and increases commercial property values.

Walker stated that as previously mentioned, the Mass. Audubon Society gave her a proposal of \$17,000.00 for the bird migration study. Since this is quite high, Walker added that she spoke with a local birder in Heath who agreed to do a study (for much less), and the Mass. Audubon Society could sign off on it. Schulte stated that he would be willing to have language put in the Special Permit stating that they would agree to fund up to \$10,000.00-\$11,000. 00 for the fall migration study, and if there were significant effects to birds, mitigation efforts would be discussed, as suggested by the birders.

Walker opened the hearing to public comment.

Tom Campbell stated that putting in a large obstacle on a hillside will change the visual perception no matter what the size, and went on to say that he would rather see a windmill than inhale the noxious gasses that alternate methods of energy generate.

Christopher Loftus mentioned that the wind turbine is not augmenting Berkshire East's power, and that the applicant is trying to create long term viability. Loftus commended the Board for all their time and understanding in reviewing this project.

Bill Stephens stated that he is in full support of Berkshire East and wishes them success but felt that Dan's (Miller) concerns with the height do have viability and that he himself is concerned with the shadow flicker that might be caused. Stephens further stated that he appreciates the time the Town has spent in this project and thanked Berkshire East for bringing it forward.

Walker stated that the Board would start drafting the permit tonight and hopefully finish at the next hearing. Walker asked of the Board if they would like to keep the Hearing open or close it; if the hearing is closed, no more new information can be accepted or considered. The Board voted to keep the hearing open by majority.

Next the Board and Applicants began reviewing a draft of the Special Permit, as written by Walker. Walker stated that the next hearing would focus on the Special Permit Criteria and hopefully finalize the permit and bring it to a vote. At 9:01 P.M. Walker made a motion to continue the hearing to November 5th at 7:00 P.M. at the Town Hall. The motion was seconded by Pratt and passed unanimously.

Respectfully Submitted,
Carlene Millett,

At 9:08 P.M. the Board reconvened for their regular meeting. The Board reviewed and approved an ANR submitted by Anne Rancourt. The Board also reviewed the Building Inspector's report for the month.

Walker informed the Board that Mr. Bowen had dropped off the final signed agreement, as well as the map of the gravel pit and that he will file the Notice of settlement with the Registry of Deeds.

The Board approved the minutes from the 10/1/09 hearing and meeting, as well as the invoice submitted by Millett for typing of the minutes.

Walker mentioned upcoming CPTC Board training sessions.

The Board made an appointment for their next meeting on 11/19, with Marie Hall to discuss the opening of a campground, and decided to put the Board of Health/Coli issue on the 12/3 meeting agenda, as some members will be missing on the 19th.

At 9:27 P.M. Walker made a motion to adjourn the meeting. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.

Submitted by Gisela Walker