

Planning Board minutes May 24 2023

Planning Board members in attendance

Zoom: Van Stoddard, Steve Freedman, Swan Keyes, Tim Shores, Molly Daniell

Town Hall: Richard Nathhorst, Tom Ewing

Minutes taken by Tim Shores

Started at 7:30

1. Steve asked if there were any nominations for chair.
 - a. Richard suggested a rotating chair. This would help people to learn more about the Planning Board process.
 - i. Steve thinks this would seem unstable.
 - ii. Van thinks it would be a good idea a year from now, but at this time of transition it would seem confusing to people trying to reach the Board.
 - iii. Swan likes the idea and thinks she's heard of other towns doing this, although right now might not be a good time due to being in the middle of comprehensive planning.
 - iv. Tim and Richard suggested setting up a single email account through the town web domain for the entire board, so that people don't need to figure out which individual to reach out to.
 - b. Molly asked: What are the duties of the chair?
 - i. Richard: Advertising hearings, informing abutters of site plan proposals, coordinating other Planning Board members.
 - ii. Steve: Setting agendas for each meeting, and responding to incoming questions.
 - iii. Van observed that it's important for the chair to have enough experience on Planning, and it takes a long time for someone to gain enough experience on the Planning Board.
 - c. Tom nominated Tim, citing his work on the Comprehensive Plan, and because Tim is the one from the younger board members with the most experience. Vice chairs can assist with administrative tasks.
 - i. Steve seconded.
 - ii. Richard observed that Tim is qualified, but tied up with a grad school program, full-time job, a family, and the comprehensive plan.
 - iii. Van asked Tim if he'd like to serve as chair -- Tim said he wouldn't like to serve.
 - d. Steve nominated Tom, Van and Tim seconded. Tom agreed to do it.
 - e. Tim nominated Richard, Swan seconded.

- f. Swan asked if we might consider co-chairs. Richard moved that we consider co-chairs, Tim seconded.
 - i. Tom said he preferred not to organize with co-chairs. The board decided to not consider this question.
 - g. Steve called the question on the first motion nominating Tom as chair.
 - i. Voting Yes: Steve, Van, Tom, Swan
 - ii. Abstentions: Molly, Tim, Richard
2. Van nominated Steve as Vice Chair, Tim seconded.
 - a. Voting Yes: Van, Tom, Swan, Steve, Molly, Tim
 - b. Abstentions: Richard
3. Tim gave Comp Plan update. All goes well. Steering Group appointed Andrew Vlock and Jenny Daniell as co-chairs, created subcommittees to work on an outreach plan and the survey, and at the second meeting had a very creative discussion about how to organize community visioning meetings that can reach a great diversity of Leverett residents.
 - a. Steering requested that Tim stick around as clerk, taking minutes and helping with technical questions.
 - b. Action step: Tim will circulate the approved minutes from the first Steering Group meeting, and the not-yet-approved minutes from the second meeting.
4. On May 4, 2023, Margie McGinnis forwarded a Site Plan Review to the Planning Board
 - a. Application details
 - i. Applicant: Valley Solar LLC
 - ii. Application date: 4/7/23
 - iii. Present property owner: Phillip Hirsch
 - iv. Address AND Address of property to be affected: 9 Cave Hill Rd
 - v. Phone: 413-374-5841
 - vi. Description of proposed building
 1. Width: 50' 10"
 2. Depth: 20' 7"
 3. Height: 10' 11"
 4. Zoning district: RR
 5. Type: Ground mount solar array
 6. Description: Installation of 42 panel ground mounted solar array. System size 15.12 kW DC. Includes installation of SolarEdge 19.4 kWh Energy Bank. Will also be trenching 130 ft from rear of house to system.
 - vii. Principle reason for this application: Height of system is 131.25 inches, maximum height allowed per zoning is 108 inches.
 - viii. Signed: Patrick Rondeau
 - b. Steve explained that he got information from Ken Kahn about the hearing procedure.

- i. Need to set up a public hearing within 65 days of the receipt of the application by the Town Clerk. Lisa received the application on May 4.
 - ii. Steve proposed that we post a public hearing for our June meeting as normally scheduled.
 - iii. The application includes a list of abutters that we need to send certified mail.
5. Van suggested we follow Ken's advice about changing the zoning bylaw to increase the permitted height of ground-mounted solar installations. We've seen a lot of installations exceed that height. Richard agreed.
 - a. Tom said that there's a tradition of not proposing zoning changes at fall Town Meeting due to how fall Town Meeting is less well attended. However, this change would not have the impact that many zoning changes would have, thus it should be OK to bring it to Fall Town Meeting.
6. The Board discussed Roberta Bryant's request to open a flea market on the weekends on her farm. (see email below)
 - a. Her property is in a commercial zone, and per zoning bylaw, "Other retail stores and services" needs a Special Permit. This would be a matter for the Zoning Board of Appeals.
 - b. Tom will communicate with Lisa to let them know the procedure as written in the zoning bylaw.
7. Richard shared the draft report of the Leverett solar assessment researched by UMass Extension in partnership with the Leverett Energy Committee. It's a comprehensive assessment of Leverett's current and potential solar capacity, in terms of power grid infrastructure, rooftops, land use, and bylaws.
8. Steve welcomed Molly to the Board
9. Steve suggested that we transition to in-person meetings, because he finds that in-person meetings promote better quality of discussion. Richard pointed out that MA State Law requires the hybrid option and they promote more participation. Swan pointed out that a hybrid option makes the meeting accessible to people who are immunocompromised.
10. Next meeting will be at Town Hall and Zoom on June 14, returning to our normal schedule (2nd Wednesday of the month).

From: <townclerk@leverett.ma.us>

Date: Tue, May 23, 2023 at 1:10 PM

Subject: Flea Market

To: <winosteve2@gmail.com>, Richard Paul Nathhorst <RPNathhorst@leverett.net>, Tim Shores <timoethylshores@gmail.com>, Molly Daniell <altermolly@gmail.com>, Swan Keyes <swan.keyes@gmail.com>, Tom Ewing <ewing.tom@gmail.com>

Good afternoon,

Torie O'Dell (Roberta Bryant's daughter) just stopped in to ask about getting permission to open a flea market on the weekends at Roberta's Farm. I said I would email the board and find out next steps for her.

I assume she'll need to go to a meeting with you. Her phone number is 413-834-4469 if someone could follow up with her.

Thanks,

Lisa