

**SELECT BOARD
MINUTES**

**August 13, 2015
Special Meeting**

Present: Tom Jacobs, Chair, John McFadden, V. Chair (via phone), Justin Corcoran, Michael Keane, Donald Campbell, and Jim Carroll.

Also present: Stuart Hurd, Town Manager, Dan Monks, Assistant Manager, and approximately 20 residents.

Absent: Sharyn Brush.

The purpose of this special meeting was to address the Chelsea and Apple Hill solar projects.

The Chair opened the meeting at 7:00 pm in the Town Office conference room. He then recused himself from the discussion for a professional conflict and left the table. He noted that he has asked staff to develop an ordinance to address aesthetics and siting of renewable energy projects. Due to John McFadden's participation by phone and the difficulties that presents, the Board move to appoint a temporary Chair. Michael Keane moved and Jim Carroll seconded the nomination of Justin Corcoran to fill that role. The vote was unanimous. Justin Corcoran indicated that Board member comments would follow a brief staff outline and then the public would be invited to speak.

The Manager then outlined what he knew of the current PSB hearing process now underway. The Town may intervene and/or send Board comments to the PSB clerk for inclusion in the decision process. There is a technical hearing on the projects on September 18th at 2:30 pm in Montpelier.

Donald Campbell indicated that the Planning Commission had reviewed these projects in 2014 and asked that project screening be used to reduce visual impacts. Otherwise, the projects appeared to meet the requirements of the Land Use Regulations and the Town Plan.

Jim Carroll made a motion to intervene. There was no second at this time.

Discussion continued. Michael Keane addressed the size of the project and the investment benefits for the developer if the project is completed by the end of 2016. Dan Monks indicated that the project will pay Town property taxes based on the income approach. The Education Tax is developed based on a dollar figure per kW. The combined projects will generate 4.0 MW.

At this point, Justin Corcoran opened the meeting to public comment. Rick Carroll, Apple Hill, believes that the developers are not forthright and that the projects were sited here because the land was inexpensive. He discussed his concerns with the view shed as well. Bill Christian indicated that the project was a good one; that high tension lines already divide the Apple Hill development; that the site is ideal for solar; and the project appears to meet the regulations. Rep.

Mary Morrissey encouraged legal action to strengthen our position. Mike Bethel, an opponent, believes the scenic value of the area will be hurt. Sam Restino wondered where this would connect to the grid. Diana Leazer, Apple Hill, had a concern for the process and thought a strong message from the Board would help gain an understanding of the full impact. Peter Lawrence, Apple Hill and attorney for the Apple Hill Association, believes that the voice of the Town will be given more weight than the voice of the Association. The Association has entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) which provides for no access through Apple Hill, some mitigation of screening concerns, limits access to the Chelsea site, and provides some long term protections for the Association when dismantling occurs in 30 years or so. He also believes that, with the clear cutting of the site, wind and traffic noise will become troublesome to the Association. Jeff Grimshaw believes these projects are long term landscape blight and provided several examples from other States. Wendy Lawrence, Apple Hill, indicated that new high tension lines were needed because the existing are at capacity according to the developer. Jan Martin Bopp, an educator now retired, felt that the Town needed to plan better to get ahead of projects such as these; we appear to be unprepared.

Discussion now returned to the Board. On a motion by Michael Keane, seconded by Jim Carroll, the Board voted unanimously to ask the PSB to halt the 2 solar projects because of their inevitable damage to the environmental, safety, and aesthetic values of the natural and historical surroundings. Donald Campbell reiterated his support for policies which improve renewable energy use, and indicated that this Board should weigh in on projects such as this in the future to insure that screening and buffers are well designed and maintained.

The meeting adjourned at 8:28 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Stuart A. Hurd