

Town of Canton

Planning Board Meeting Minutes

August 16, 2022

Municipal Boardroom - 60 Main Street, Canton

6:00pm

Members Present

Chairperson Debra Backus, Sigie Barr (via Zoom), John Casserly, Betsy Hodge, William Myers, Eric Barr (alternate)
Recording Secretary Jeni Reed

Members Absent

None

Others Present

Code Enforcement Officer Michael McQuade; Applicants Tony Yonnone & Joe Hens; Members of the Public Kathleen Casey, Pam & Jim Rose, Tom Graser, Carol & Tracy Sheesley

Public Hearing

A public hearing was conducted to discuss the request for a special use permit at 95 Judson Street Road, Canton, NY to develop a 4.5MW solar project. The public hearing was called to order at 6:00pm by Chairperson Backus.

The public hearing began with an introduction of the Planning Board members, and all attendees.

A brief presentation of the proposed project was given for the benefit of the public by Tony Yonnone of SolAmerica.

Tracy Sheesley, residing at 90 Judson Street Road, Canton

Mr. Sheesley shared information regarding the accomplishments of the farm, including at the national level, and of their contributions to the community. He noted that they are not planning to make any changes to the farm, decrease the number of animals, or lessen their agricultural activities. The current use of the land in question is only for hay, and they do not feel this land should be considered prime agricultural land. Mr. Sheesley estimated it would cost about \$80,000 to tile and drain this parcel of land, which may not be feasible or result in an improvement in the condition of the soil. A solar project in this location would prevent the issues and concerns related to haying, and instead the Sheesleys would be purchasing their hay for the farm locally which would be funded through the solar project income they receive. The Sheesleys have no intention of getting out of agriculture; this project would just make it easier to continue their success with the animals and continue to improve their stock. A solar project approval would allow them to continue with their farm. Without the proposed 40 acres they still have 60 acres of undeveloped land within the village. The current access road is maintained with crushed stone every couple of years and shouldn't present a complication.

Jim Rose, residing at 159 Meade Road, Canton

Mr. Rose noted that there is a proposed solar project on land located directly behind their home as well. He thanked the Sheesley's for their work and contributions to the Town, but also shared his concern about the significant loss of agricultural land to proposed solar projects. He does not agree with the proposal, and worries about future generations and

where they will be able to grow crops. He understands this is not easy and that farmers are looking for options. He feels that we will regret these choices to move to solar projects in the future.

Carol Sheesley, residing at 90 Judson Street Road, Canton

Mrs. Sheesley indicated that the Town Planning Board received a letter from Michael Newtown, Dean of Engineering at SUNY Canton in support of the project. The letter was read by Mrs. Sheesley, and has been attached to these minutes for the record. Mrs. Sheesley also shared a written statement in support of the project for the public record, and the statement has been attached to these minutes.

Kathleen Casey, residing at 105 Judson Street Road, Canton

Ms. Casey resides on property which is adjacent to the proposed location of the solar project. She noted that she is very opposed to the solar farm, and is concerned about the potential decrease in future property values. Ms. Casey indicated that she feels the solar farms are ugly and add no value to the properties they are located on. She also stated that she does not see any benefit to these projects, and they shouldn't be located where they can be seen. Ms. Casey stated that this project will be detrimental to the beauty of the Village.

No additional public comments were offered. Chairperson Backus indicated that all public comments would be taken into consideration, and would become part of the public record.

Chairperson Backus closed the public hearing at 6:27pm.

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 6:28 pm by chairperson Debra Backus.

Approval of Minutes

A motion was made by William Myers to approve the minutes from the June 28, 2022 meeting. The motion was seconded by John Casserly and carried.

A motion was made by John Casserly to approve the minutes from the July 11, 2022 meeting. The motion was seconded by Betsy Hodge and carried.

Agenda Items

1. Old Business

- a. Discussion of proposed solar project at 95 Judson Street Road, Canton
 - It was indicated that the 30 day coordinated review for this project ends August 18.
 - All responses received to date have been in favor of the Town Planning Board's intent to declare lead agency.
 - Solar Engineers Barton & Logiudice will begin working on parts II and III of the SEQR, and will provide them to the Planning Board by the end of this week.
 - The next meeting for this project should be held Tuesday September 6, 2022 at 6pm.
 - The intent of that meeting will be to look at parts II and III of the SEQR and review the coordinated review process results. An official vote could be held if everything is submitted to the satisfaction of the Planning Board's consultants.
- b. Email to Town Board
 - Chairperson Backus referenced an email she submitted on behalf of the Town Planning Board to supervisor Mary Ann Ashley, regarding the number of solar projects currently proposed in the Town and the need for additional guidance.

- An email was sent back to Chairperson Backus from Ms. Ashley and the Town Board will be taking the information under consideration. There is no additional information at this time.

2. New Business

a. Review of current solar projects:

- County Route 27 project proposal - there will be a meeting of the Town Planning Board held August 30, 2022 at 6pm to review part I of the SEQR. Barton & Logiudice is finalizing the submission package. If part I of the SEQR is satisfactory, the Town Planning Board can pass the resolution of Intent to Declare Lead Agency and send the letters to begin the coordinated review at this meeting.
- US Route 11 project proposal - the 30 day review period for this project ended July 11, 2022, and the needed SHPO information was received August 9, 2022. It is hoped that everything will be satisfactorily submitted and a meeting can be held September 15, 2022 at 6pm.
- Meade Road project proposal - Barton & Logiudice is reviewing the resubmission package from August 12, 2022, and should have a comment letter done by the end of the month. Part I of the SEQR will need to be resubmitted due to the new access road, which is proposed to connect to State Highway 68 between the two existing curbs. It was noted that this project was discussed briefly at the SLC Planning Board level, but they have put no comments on record. It was indicated that the developers must put in an application to the Department of Transportation. Chairperson Backus will reach out to Town Attorney Eric Gustafson via Supervisor Mary Ann Ashley for additional clarification. An email came from Town solar attorney William Buchan and was read for the record; a copy is attached to these minutes. The email from counsel recommended that the process for this project could move forward within the Planning Board. The next meeting for this project is scheduled for October 3, 2022 at 6pm pending additional information.
- Although no plans have yet been formally submitted, a developer for a proposed solar project on the Old Dekalb Road is looking to schedule a preliminary meeting with the Town Planning Board. It was noted that they intend to submit their plans to the St Lawrence County Planning Board by August 24, for review at their next meeting on September 8, 2022. The Town Planning Board proposed a preliminary meeting with these developers for October 17, 2022 at 6pm.

b. Proposal to increase the Planning Board:

- The potential proposal to increase the size of the Town Planning Board from 5 members to 7 members with 2 alternates was discussed.
 - The pros and cons of the possibility for the increase were discussed.
 - Code Enforcement Officer McQuade mentioned the current discussion among the Town Board to potentially offer a stipend to members of the Planning Board.
 - Upon discussion, it was decided to recommend that the Town Planning Board remain at 5 members, but increase the number of alternates from 2 to 4.

A motion was made by John Casserly to recommend to the Town Board that the Town Planning Board increase the number of its alternates to 4. The motion was seconded by William Myers, and carried.

A small amount of public comment was permitted on this topic - Mrs. Pam Rose shared a concern regarding the addition of new members and the potential for information on long term projects (such as the Meade Road solar project) to be lost. Mr. Jim Rose also stated his concern about attendance among alternates to the Board and the consistency of project knowledge when making decisions. Some discussion was held among the Planning Board members regarding the benefits of alternate members and the ability to keep all members and alternates up to speed on all projects.

Next Meetings

Upcoming meetings of the Town Planning Board are tentatively scheduled as follows:

- August 30, 2022 at 6pm (County Route 27 solar project)
- September 6, 2022 at 6pm (95 Judson Street Road solar project)
- September 15, 2022 at 6pm (US Route 11 solar project)
- October 3, 2022 at 6pm (Meade Road solar project)
- October 17, 2022 at 6pm (Old Dekalb Road solar project)

All meetings will be held in the boardroom of the municipal building at 60 Main Street, Canton. The option to “view-only” will be made possible by way of Zoom Virtual Meeting.

Adjournment

A motion was made to adjourn the meeting by John Casserly; the motion was seconded by William Myers and carried. The meeting was adjourned at 7:19pm.

Date: August 28, 2022

Jeni Reed
Recording Secretary