

Town of Canton Planning Board

Meeting Minutes

January 8, 2024

Municipal Boardroom - 60 Main Street, Canton

6:00pm

Members Present

Chairperson Ian MacKellar, Eric Barr, John Casserly, Betsy Hodge, William Myers, Sigie Barr (alternate), Dakota Casserly (alternate)

Members Absent

None

Others Present

Margaret Mauch (Town Resident)

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 6:02pm by Chairperson Ian MacKellar.

Adoption of Agenda

The agenda was approved by the Planning Board for the meeting.

Public Comment

Chairperson MacKellar opened the public comment period reminding people to state their name and where they are from, and keep their comments pertinent to the agenda topics at hand while adhering to the three minute time limit, and their comments will be added to the record.

Margaret Mauch

Ms. Mauch noted that the noise trial for the No Dogs Left Behind kennel has been postponed for the second time. In addition, there are conflicting reports regarding the biting of an employee on December 28th which creates concerns for the neighbors about the potential for dangerous dogs at the location. At this time the property is still being operated as a kennel, and it is unknown if the sale of the property has taken place. The current list of dogs registered at the location has been requested under the FOIL act, which shows a total of 28 dogs currently at the location. It was noted that no new dogs have been brought in from China at this time, and a few have come in and been moved off site including one dog moved to Oregon as it was unadoptable. The noise in the neighborhood appears to have improved somewhat with some sound being able to be heard in residents' homes but barking not appearing to last as long as it did previously; however it was noted that it is currently winter and residents are inside more with the windows closed which may give the impression of improved noise levels that will not be sustained when summer comes.

Finally, Ms. Mauch offered her thanks to the Board for the way their meetings are conducted; including the openness of members and the allowance for public comment at meetings.

Meeting Minutes

This was tabled as any draft meeting minutes were not available to the Planning Board at this time.

Agenda Items

1. Old Business

a. Renewal resolution (Resolution #2 of 2024) for the Old Dekalb Solar Project

- The contents of the resolution were read aloud for the benefit of the Planning Board and public record by chairperson Ian MacKellar.
- A short discussion regarding the resolution ensued among Planning Board members.
 - It was noted that there does not appear any reason not to approve the resolution, as of all the solar projects this particular one was the least contentious and the only one the County Planning Board approved.
 - This project is the only one approved that is lower than the 5 megawatt limit for community solar projects (the proposed project is 3.3 megawatts).
 - The Planning Board was reminded that only one extension per project can be permitted; after this time if the project has not begun, the developers would need to restart the permitting process from the beginning.

A motion was made by William Myers to approve the resolution; the motion was seconded by John Casserly and carried unanimously. The extension was approved for the Old Dekalb Solar Project and the resolution will be filed with the Town Clerk within five days.

b. Renewal resolution (Resolution #1 of 2024) for the Nickerson Road Solar Project

- The contents of the resolution were read aloud for the benefit of the Planning Board and public record by chairperson Ian MacKellar.
- No discussion was offered by members of the Planning Board.

A motion was made by John Casserly to approve the resolution; the motion was seconded by Eric Barr and carried unanimously. The extension was approved for the Nickerson Road Solar Project and the resolution will be filed with the Town Clerk within five days.

2. New Business

a. Zoning Code Update

- The Town Board will be holding a public hearing on the Zoning Code updates this coming Wednesday (January 10) at 5 pm.
- It was asked if anyone was aware if the Town Board would be voting on the final updates at this meeting; it was noted that this was discussed at the Town Board Meeting in December and recommended that voting not occur at the same time as the public hearing, however it appears that voting may still occur.
- Dakota Casserly offered several comments/concerns regarding the proposed Zoning Code updates:
 - The minimum lot size in the Rural district is proposed to change from one acre to two acres - this may impact those with fewer resources as they attempt to acquire land for building and other use. He asked if the Town has seen a threat to its rural character which would prompt such a change.
 - Dakota also commented on the proposal to prohibit solar projects in the residential agricultural districts which will effectively create a barrier around the Village; he is in favor of this proposal but asked if the Board is missing the opportunity to create a setback requirement from road frontage for solar projects in an attempt to improve aesthetics.

- Mr. Casserly intends to comment on these items at the public hearing as an individual resident.
 - It was also discussed if the new zoning will affect the proposed EDF solar project; the Planning Board is unaware of the specifics at this time.
 - It was finally noted that the old zoning code has been in place for the majority of the Planning Board decisions.
- b. Solar Project Updates
- Meade Road Project - stakes have been placed for the proposed entrance off route 68 at this time.
 - Grassy Grove Projects - no new information is currently available.
 - A new project is being proposed at Woodbridge Corners; however there is currently no information or timeline available on the proposal.
- c. Compensation Forms for the Planning Board
- Town Supervisor Mary Ann Ashley had planned to attend the Planning Board meeting, but instead sent an email with information on the proposal to all members of the Planning Board.
 - It was noted that the Town Board felt that it was time all volunteer boards be treated equally, and one board currently receives a stipend for their work.
 - Each individual of the Planning Board can choose whether to accept the offer of compensation from the Town.
 - Several members noted at the meeting that they will not accept the compensation offer as they feel they are “strictly volunteers” and want to make it clear that they are not influenced by or beholden to any particular individual or group.
 - It was also mentioned that the position of third alternate for the Planning Board (not currently utilized) has been officially removed.
 - This prompted discussion regarding the process for designation of alternates as voting members during meetings. It was indicated that the code should be corrected to allow for alternates to vote in the case of absenteeism (currently prohibited). This can be found in existing Town Code Article 10, 7072, section B.
 - A second option suggested by Dakota Casserly was the potential for offering tax breaks to members of volunteer boards, as is done for local first responders.
 - Finally, it was noted that it does make sense for the chairperson to accept the compensation offer due to the additional work requirements involved.
 - There was no official mention of who, if anyone, would ultimately accept or decline the compensation offer.
- d. Jeni Reed will be stepping down as recording secretary for the Planning Board and ZBA, effective February 29, 2024. As such, a new recording secretary will need to be identified.
- It was noted that this individual should be selected from those outside of current Town politics.
 - The search and designation will ultimately be up to Supervisor Ashley and the Town Board.
 - It was also mentioned that the proposed new Zoning Code does not indicate the administrative set up for the Town Planning Board.
- e. Cathy Shrady would like to attend an upcoming Planning Board meeting to offer a powerpoint presentation and walk through a hypothetical project utilizing proposed resources. This will likely be added to the February meeting agenda.

Next Meetings

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

- Monday, February 5 at 6:00pm
- Monday, March 4 at 6:00pm
- Monday April 1 at 6:00pm

These meetings will be held in the boardroom of the municipal building at 60 Main Street, Canton. The option to participate remotely will be made possible by way of Zoom Virtual Meeting.

Public Comment

Chairperson MacKellar opened the second public comment period; at this time no public comment was offered and the public comment period was closed.

Adjournment

A motion was made to adjourn the meeting by John Casserly; the motion was seconded by Eric Barr and carried. The meeting was adjourned at 7:08pm.

Date: February 2, 2024

Jeni Reed
Recording Secretary