

Approved September 1, 2015

CORNWALL SELECT BOARD
Special Meeting
Cornwall Town Hall
August 11, 2015

Members Present: Ben Wood, Magna Dodge, John Roberts, and Ben Marks
(by speaker phone)

Also Present: R.J. Adler, Duane Peterson, SunCommon; Stephen R. Payne; Gary Barnett; Frank Broughton; Ruth Lambert; Roma Mortensen; Betsy Guptill; Donald Guptill, Jessica Lipnack, Rich Carpenter; Katherine Branch; E. J. Bartlett; Stever Bartlett; Kristi Tolgyesi; Bob Burton; Joan Lynch; Jack Carter; Roberta Carnwath; Rick Greene; Mark Wood; Kathy Grzyb; Stan Grzyb; Abi Sessions; Fred Greenman; Annie Wilson; Daniel Cooperrider; Jamie McKenna; Brit McKenna; Alex Wolff; Susan Payne-Bruce; Jim Bruce; Holly Noordsy; Cy Tall; T Tall; Brian Kemp; Alice Berninghausen John Berninghausen; Tim Fisher; Jim Duclos; Jean Terwilliger; Marc Lapin; Andrew Munkres; John Isham; Pat D'Andrea; Bjarki Sears; Anne Collins

The meeting was called to order at 7:00pm. Ben Wood announced that an audio recording is being made of the meeting, and will be made available upon request for any interested person.

Magna D. MOVED /John R. SECONDED a motion to approve the agenda as distributed. Motion passed – 4 in favor, 0 opposed.

The purpose of this meeting is to hear a presentation by representatives of SunCommon on plans for a 150-watt ground mounted solar installation on the property of Stephen Payne on West Street, and for the Select Board and Cornwall citizens to ask questions, get answers, and voice concerns.

Information about the project was presented to the Select Board on August 4 by R. J. Adler of SunCommon. Tonight's special meeting was called to allow increased citizen participation in discussions.

Ben Wood mentioned that the Select Board is currently developing an interim bylaw setting standards for renewable energy projects in Cornwall in regards to setbacks, screening and decommissioning. While the Public Service Board (PSB) has the sole authority to approve or deny a Certificate of Public Good for renewable energy projects, Act 56 authorizes municipalities to set certain standards in a free standing bylaw.

SunCommon representatives RJ Adler, Solar Community Organizer and

Duane Peterson, Co-President and Co-Founder, provided some background information on the purpose and history of SunCommon, a Vermont company based in Waterbury and information on how a community solar program, such as the one planned for West Street, works. The following is a summary of their presentation, their answers to questions asked by the Select Board and citizens, and concerns and comments of the citizens.

A one-acre array powers 30 homes through group net metering, and makes it possible for any household to be part of a decentralized power system, including those who can't have an individual system at home. Memberships can be carried from home to home within the Green Mountain Power service area, when people move.

Funding for community solar programs comes from income tax credits (from the IRS) for 30% of construction costs, debt equity, and RECs (renewable energy certificates). 3rd party RECs are traded on the market and are currently being sold out of state. A new law in Vermont will require Vermont utilities to buy and sell more renewable energy in Vermont, beginning in 2017. After 2017, RECs will be used to count toward Vermont's state goal, which calls for 90% of the state's energy needs (electric, heating, and transportation) to be met with renewable energy resources by 2050.

Mr. Peterson said that it is actually difficult in Vermont to find the right site for a solar array, a flat site with no ledge, no endangered species, near a paved road and a power line, and with an eager host.

The planned community solar array on the property of Stephen Payne on West Street would be open to 30 member households. The landowner and neighbors will have priority for membership, then other Cornwall households, before membership is open to others. The life of the program is 25 years. The power generated will go into the regional grid and will be used closest to where it is generated.

The solar panels will be mounted on posts that are pounded into the ground (no concrete). The panels will not move with the sun and the sun removes the snow. SunCommon will lease the land from the landowner, provide screening plantings (in collaboration with Vermont Edible Landscapes) and maintenance of the site and infrastructure according to terms of Operations and Maintenance Agreement required to receive the Certificate of Public Good from the PSB.

Adler and Peterson showed an aerial view of the proposed site, with some details on the placement of panels and views of the array from neighboring homes. SunCommon has been in contact with the nearest neighbors and has modified the design based on their concerns.

There is no decommissioning fund, and it is expected that the infrastructure would be a resource for renewable energy after the 25-year duration of this community solar program.

The Town will receive tax from the land which is at a higher rate than farmland. There is no evidence that solar arrays affect neighboring property values.

SunCommon would like to apply to the PSB for a Certificate of Public Good for the project in the next 2-3 weeks.

Some concerns and comments of those in attendance:

- 23 acres of solar array would power all the residences in Cornwall.
- Examples of screening shown by SunCommon tonight do not illustrate mature plantings, people would like other examples
- The PSB takes great pains to site substations, and to take into account esthetics. Cornwall should be asking for creative screening for this project.
- Wants to see faster growing screening.
- Company should invest in mature screening to satisfy the community.
- Concerned about any situation when a landowner of a solar array does not having view affected but neighbor does.
- The issue of decommissioning needs attention by SunCommon.
- Urges the Select Board to consider a clause in the Town Plan about about setting up an escrow fund for decommissioning for solar arrays.
- Closest neighbor feels that SunCommon and the landowner have been responsive to his concerns.
- Landowner appreciates the opportunity to be able to afford to live on land that has been in his family for generations.
- Concern that this type of system will not be used to meet Vermont's energy goals until 2017.
- Because Cornwall is a PACE town, there are other options for households.
- Supports the project.
- Concern about what happens to the infrastructure after decommissioning as e-waste.
- Appreciate SunCommon's attention to siting and screening.
- Solar arrays are things of beauty.
- Question about whether SunCommon has sold or subcontracted their easements and whether they would be willing to share a copy of an easement with the Select Board and Town Attorney (answer was "not yet" to selling or subcontracting easements and "yes" to sharing a copy of an easement with the Select Board and Town Attorney).
- Encourage the Select Board to adopt standards.
- Concern about property values and compensation for the neighbors.
- Appreciation to the Select Board in keeping citizens involved.
- Urged SunCommon to buy and retire the RECs.

Bobbie Carnwath announced that the Cornwall Energy Committee is conducting an energy survey. Paper copies available tonight and will be available on the website. Handouts about heat pumps also available.

Magna D. MOVED /John R. SECONDED a motion to adjourn the meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:15 pm.

Respectfully submitted, Sharon Tierra, Clerk of the Select Board