

**Town of Bennington
Planning Commission**

Monday, April 18, 2016

5:00 p.m.

Town of Bennington Conference Room

205 South Street

Bennington, Vermont 05201

MINUTES

Members Present: Charles Copp, Barry Horst, Nick Lasoff, Ken Sweirad

Also Present: Dan Monks, Keith Whitcomb, Joey Kulken

Meeting was called to order at 5:00 p.m.

Initial review of plan for solar arrays proposed for parcel located east of North Bennington Road and east of Route 7A (behind Home Depot and Carbone Auto Dealerships): The Planning Commission discussed, at length, the proposed solar projects.

The Planning Commission noted that insufficient information was submitted for it to make any final determinations regarding compliance with the Bennington Town Plan and the Bennington Screening of Solar Facilities Ordinance, but stated several preliminary concerns described below.

Additional information necessary for the Planning Commission to make a final determination regarding compliance include the following:

Visual Impact Analysis – including analysis of visual impacts for all public roads that may afford a view of the property (Route 7A (a Scenic Byway), Rice Lane, North Bennington Road, Route 279, etc.); analysis of visual impacts on adjacent properties, including the Harwood Hill Motel, Publyk House, and Krawczyks' property, and visual analysis from scenic viewpoints (Battle Monument).

Identification on the project plans of all prime and statewide importance agricultural soils. (An initial review of the soils maps indicates that a large portion of the project is located on prime and statewide importance soils).

Identification on the project plans of any rare or endangered species and/or wildlife corridors.

Screening plans for the projects.

A narrative describing how the proposed projects comply with the Bennington Town Plan and the Town's Screening of Solar Facilities Ordinance

After a review of the limited information provided, the Planning Commission had the following concerns and observations:

Given that the Town Plan states that the RR District is "intended to support limited growth while preserving the rural landscape and scenic natural resources," Battle Creek 2 and 3 which are located in the RR District, do not appear to comply with the stated intention of the Town Plan for the RR District.

The Town's Solar Ordinance requires that solar facilities be screened by a year round visual screen

from public streets, scenic viewpoints and adjacent properties. It appears that Battle Creek 2 and 3 do not comply with the Town's Screening Ordinance as those projects will be clearly visible from public streets and adjacent properties. Without more information, it is unclear how visible Battle Creek 1 will be.

The project exceeds 10 acres (two of them individually and all of them cumulatively). In accordance with the Town Plan, only arrays located within preferred areas (as defined in the Town Plan) may exceed 10 acres. The applicant has not indicated on the plans why the proposed arrays should be considered to be located within a preferred area.

The Planning Commission noted that the comments above are preliminary. When additional information is submitted, the Planning Commission will provide a more comprehensive review. In the meantime, given the information provided, the Planning Commission believes that Battle Creek 2 and 3, as currently proposed, do not comply with the Town Plan or the Screening Ordinance, and Battle Creek 1 may not comply with the Town Plan and the Screening Ordinance.

The meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted

Daniel W. Monks
Planning Director