

Town of Blandford

Public Hearing

DG Solar #2

March 6, 2019

Present: Rick Barnard, Sharon Barnard, Julie Mueller, Sarah Simpson

Call to Order: Rick Barnard, Chair

OPEN HEARING –6:02 PM

GEORGE MILLARD SOLAR (DG #2)

DG Solar (John Thomas-SWCA, Joe Hamel-George Millard Solar)

Sharon read the hearing notice.

Rick read the ground rules for the meeting

Joe Hamel and John Thomas presented for DG Solar.

John Thomas confirmed that all boards were met with on 2/13/19.

48 acres, utilizing 15 acres, Comprised of mixed agricultural and old harvest fields with current easement owned by Eversource. Easement bisects property. Proposing removal of trees to improve easement along SW corner.

Two separate arrays. East and West. Each system will be serviced by their own respective basins.

Proposed temporary access road off of George Millard Road on Southern side. Has been redesigned and regraded per Michael Petrin's suggestion. Materials excavated from site will be used on site.

In communication with Eversource to access easement and discuss removal of trees.

Stormwater : Watershed is directing water (naturally) to NE and NW respectively. Erosion control measures will be used between fields on Northern side. Side swales will be used to control water runoff from access road.

Seeking peer review advice on 72 hour rule.

Withdrawal letter was provided to PB for DG #1.

Will be providing transportation study.

Has list of abutters and project fact sheet.

DG will do rollback taxes due to Town due to Chapter 61.

Joe Hamel confirmed that this will be a 2020 project due to delays with Eversource.

Another concern is the recyclability of on site storage units. DG will decommission in 20 years and will either pay for the recycling or they will break down components and sell off.

Traffic concerns: No parking allowed along N. Blandford or George Millard Road. Traffic control officer will be notified if major deliveries are anticipated. Expect 3-4 months of high traffic for construction, then standard vehicles to access.

Other projects in NJ and IN show success of polypropylene fabric. Not considered ignition resistant or non flammable but the flash point is so high not likely.

Jeff mentioned concern for traveling hill with heavy equipment, as it is a gravel road. Jeff asked if DG would be willing to repair road. Joe Hamel advised that they would review and 'leave the road in as good of condition as they found it'. Julie also voiced concern. Expressed concern for other residents and access, drainage of the project into the public road.

Julie asked Dick Gates from Con Comm what was decided for drainage. It was confirmed that it is not a jurisdictional issue for Con Comm but they expressed concern for water getting off of the site.

Further review of how access road was improved for drainage purposes.

Sharon asked who would be inspecting road? Joe Hamel advised open to suggestions. Was going to photograph before and after. Town will not be out-of-pocket for repairs to George Millard Road.

Sharon asked what the biggest truck accessing the road would be. John and Joe were unable to advise. Would be at developers discretion.

TJ Cousineau asked about anchorage of solar panels. Panels are ballasted to ensure that they will not blow away.

Julie expressed concern of landscaping fabric – durability, longevity. Asked if the fabric would be replaced. Joe stated that there will be ongoing inspections to field and fabric would be replaced as needed.

Julie also expressed concern for replacement of fabric under panels (panels will be 1' off of the ground).

Sharon asked about utilization in New England and Don Brainerd stated that he believes that he has seen a solar field off of the MA Pike out east.

Spec sheet for fabric is available.

Eric asked about contractor and actual construction crew. Joe confirmed that Nextera uses the same contractors for all of their projects. Joe confirmed that they will provide 24 hour contact information for any site issues.

EPC will be 'the man in charge' during construction. Joe did not have the EPC information at this time. Mike clarified EPC responsibility.

TJ Cousineau asked about bonding issue. Joe advised that bond will be placed for any additional costs incurred for decommissioning.

Tony Van Werkhoven asked again about time of year for project, Joe advised spring. Tony asked about grade of road from George Millard Road. Tony had additional questions on construction of road. John advised the base will be constructed of 3" of crushed gravel and 8-12" of fine crushed gravel.

Don Brainerd stated that his biggest concern is the 72 hour rule for drainage issue.

Tony Van Werkhoven raised concerns about tractor trailer truck getting up to unload equipment. How will the vehicle turnaround (prior to access road being built).

Eric asked that DG propose solution in writing to issue.

Paul Martin asked about snow and panel. Joe advised that solar company would be the 'losers' if the panels do not produce the same level of power. Mithun Vyas also stated that snow is reflective and generates heat to melt snow from the panels.

Eric advised that with the one year extension, he would like to see some communication between DG and BPB as to intended project start timeframe. Joe stated that he would like to request 18 months (vs standard 12 months) for project start time.

John reviewed photographs showing that there will be little visual obstruction by solar field.

Rick advised that the hearing would continue and Board will reconvene for 7:20 for monthly meeting.

Hearing was continued at 7:10 PM.

Town of Blandford
Planning Board Meeting

March 6, 2019

NEW BUSINESS

Sharon moved to accept February minutes, Julie seconded. Unanimous.

Jim Stockseth resigned from PBP effective March 1, 2019. Board acknowledges and accepts resignation.

DG Solar letter (dated February 11, 2019) confirming withdrawal of DG Solar project #1. Sharon motioned to accept letter, Julie seconded. Unanimous.

Eric formally requested that Blandford Planning Board participate in a PVPC DLTA Solar Project (directive for solar projects for small town Planning Boards). The project is intended to produce a best practices guide for future projects. Julie motioned to join the PVPC DLTA Solar Project, Sharon seconded. Unanimous.

MVP Grant Letter – Preparedness for future weather related issues. Board is generally in agreement that they would support, but Julie raised that the Town would need to do a financial match and also, doesn't want BPB to bear the brunt of work for future projects. Eric will obtain information for match and will provide it at a later meeting.

Letter from Nextera stating 6/6/18 Sun Pin received approval from BPB for Otis Road property. Subsequently Sun Pin sold property to DG Solar (Blandford Sun LLC). Blandford Sun LLC will withdraw original application under Sun Pin and will resubmit under Otis State Road Solar Project. Sarah moved to accept letter requesting new application submission. Julie seconded. Unanimous.

Joe Hamel discussed some amendments and advised on why a new project is being proposed. Joe advised that wetlands grew since last approval and also keeping in consideration the setback rules. Will be on Con Comm agenda for 3/11/19 meeting and will hope to be on BPB agenda after that.

Joe asked tentative timeframe of hearing meeting. Rick and Eric stated that they are unable to advise due to peer review process, posting notices, etc.

Rick wanted to speak with Board about peer review and application process. He suggested that when is voting to approve the creation of process for developer to pay fees for peer review at time of application. Jeff motioned to accept creation of process. Julie seconded. Unanimous.

OLD BUSINESS

DG Solar #2

Letter from DG Solar addressing peer review concerns. John advised that he will also address any additional items brought to the Board through the public hearing this evening.

John provided hard copy documentation on fabric etc for Board.

John also provided a waiver request for transportation study.

Bylaw and Redistricting – Don Brainard

Sarah moved to propose amendment to Boundaries of Districts (Residential and Business) under bylaw of 3.3.3 in accordance with maps and verbal description presented March 6, 2019. Sharon seconded. Unanimous.

Jeff made a motion to adjourn. Sarah seconded. Unanimous.

Meeting adjourned at 8:12 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,
Sarah Simpson, Secretary