

DRAFT
Brandon Planning Commission
December 1, 2014

Planning Commission Members Present: Linda Stewart, Anne Bransfield, Tracy Wyman, Jeff Guevin

Others Present: Els Van Woert, Jeff Wallins, Gary Meffe, Jessica Edgerly Walsh, Dave Atherton

Call to Order:

Anne Bransfield called the meeting to order at 7:04PM.

Approval of Agenda:

A motion was made by Linda Stewart and seconded by Tracy Wyman to approve the agenda as presented. **The motion passed unanimously.**

Public Comment Period:

There was no discussion held.

New Business:

. Els Van Woert of Suncommon – Solar Power in Brandon/Community Solar Array

Els Van Woert and Jessica Edgerly Walsh of Suncommons were present to discuss a Community Solar Array project in Brandon. The project is in the beginning stages in talking with the stakeholders. The land will be leased from Frank Farnsworth of Wheeler Road. Sun Commons has been in business for 2½ years and is currently working with homeowners in 9 counties. The concept of this project is to replace utility bills with a solar installation payment that will remain a constant cost over the length of the membership. Community solar arrays are done through group net metering and 30 families would be eligible to participate in the Farnsworth project. Participants would be charged a monthly membership over 20 years and it is hoped that property owners will be offered an extension on that membership. This membership would not be transferrable if the house is sold and would require a credit check of the new owner. Jeff Wallins asked what the cost per share would be and Ms. Walsh advised that each percentage is worth \$40.00 on the current Green Mountain Power monthly bill. If a monthly bill is \$75.00 to \$80.00, one would purchase 2% of the array, but one can buy as many shares as they want, but the thought is to match up the shares based on one's monthly electric bill. This would be a 200 kwdc array and each percentage is 2 kilowatts. The state rate to a home owner is 17 cents per kilowatt hour, Green Mountain Power's rate is 15 cents and the rate for this service would be a fixed rate of 19 cents. Ms. Walsh stated the Public Service Board puts a fee on this and the utility is required to pay that amount to the grid. Jeff Wallins asked if the investment tax credit is taken

by the customers or Suncommons. Ms. Walsh stated Suncommons takes the investment tax credit incentives to enable them to provide a fixed membership payment. Suncommons act as the landlord and they would be responsible for the equipment, rather than individual people owning the equipment. Suncommons will do their best to engage people in Brandon since the project is going to be built in Brandon. There will be some people that can see the project from their homes and Mr. Farnsworth has reached out to the abutting neighbors and has received positive responses. Ms. Walsh advised that the permit has been submitted in order to get feedback from state entities while continuing discussions with the property owners. There is a question to Green Mountain Power regarding capacity and the Agency of Natural Resources is being questioned about the nearby stream. Mr. Farnsworth is doing both a private and community solar project. There is no screening planned, as there has been no objections or requests by the abutting property owners. There are engineering parameters for a community solar array. It was questioned what type of transformer there would be and Ms. Walsh has not heard there would not be a transformer. Mr. Wallins questioned if there are engineering drawings showing the length and height and it was noted that only the engineering map is currently available and until they hear back from the Public Service Board they will not create construction specs. Tracy Wyman questioned if an adjoining property owner decided to put up a hedge if it would affect the project. It was noted the limit on the northern end is a stream and Ms. Walsh will question whether this item has been discussed with the abutters. Suncommons are open to discussion of visual screens. It was noted if the company was screening for the golf course, they would screen on the northern edge which would be the easiest area to screen. Ms. Walsh stated Suncommons is trying to build good projects and they want happy neighbors. They have built 7 projects and have 7 projects in the permitting stage. Gary Meffe noted he supports these types of projects and commends them for building relationships with the community and working out any potential issues. Mr. Wallins stated there are some viewpoints that are of concern, as they relate to the golf course.

Old Business:

. Approval of Minutes: November 17, 2014

A motion was made by Linda Stewart and seconded by Tracy Wyman to approve the minutes of the November 17, 2014 Planning Commission meeting. **The motion passed unanimously.**

. Select Board Liaison Report – Linda Stewart

Linda Stewart stated there was nothing new to report.

. Upcoming Town Plan Work

Discussion was postponed to a subsequent meeting.

. Town Plan Draft Revisions – Future Land Use

Discussion was postponed to a subsequent meeting.

Other Business as Needed:

Town Report:

Anne Bransfield will be writing a summary of activities of the Planning Commission for the Town Report and requested input from the Board members.

Zoning Update:

Dave Atherton reported he has been dealing with zoning violations. Mr. Atherton provided an overview of some of the zoning issues and appeals that are currently in process. It was noted there have been several complaints about chickens and Section 619 of the Zoning Ordinance indicates there are restrictions regarding chickens.

With regards to the Zoning Administrator position, Mr. Atherton reported he brings this to the Select Board's attention at every meeting and has discussed this matter with the Town Manager. It was noted the Planning Commission had advertised the position and there were two people that had expressed interest. Mr. Atherton stated there has been discussion of combining the zoning administrator, code enforcement and health officer positions into one position. There has also been discussion of a member of the Town staff taking over this position. Mr. Atherton stated if this can be done in-house for a while, it would resolve the problem due to the current financial status of the town. Additional discussion of a Zoning Administrator replacement will be held at the December 15th meeting. Mr. Atherton noted that he has been dealing with several code enforcement issues.

Mr. Atherton requested a status of the Town Plan update. It was noted the Planning Commission is in the process of updating the Plan for approval. The Regional Planning Commission is assisting in updating the data in the Plan. Dave Atherton and Robin Bennett will speak with Ed Bove on Thursday concerning this matter. The Planning Commission will submit the Regional Planning Commission contract, which is to be covered by the Municipal Planning Grant, to the Select Board for approval. Mr. Atherton will be attending the Planning Commission meeting once per month.

A motion was made by Jeff Guevin and seconded by Tracy Wyman to enter into Executive Session at 8:40PM to consider a proposal by Linda Devereux (Municipal Planning Grant funds), pursuant to a specific finding under 1 VSA § 313(A)(1) that premature general public knowledge would clearly place the public body or a person involved at a substantial disadvantage. **The motion passed unanimously.**

Executive Session: 1 VSA 313(A)(1)

The Board came out of executive session at 8:45PM.

A motion was made by Linda Stewart and seconded by Jeff Guevin to enter into a contract with Linda Devereux for poster development for the Planning Commission. **The motion passed unanimously.**

Next Meetings:

December 15th
January 5th

Adjournment:

A motion was made by Linda Stewart and seconded by Jeff Guevin to adjourn the Planning Commission meeting at 8:47PM. **The motion passed unanimously.**

Respectfully Submitted,

Charlene Bryant
Recording Secretary