

WAREHAM Solar By-Law Study Committee

MINUTES OF THE MEETING

Wednesday, September 22, 2021

Place: Room 27

54 Marion Road

Wareham, MA 02571

1. CALL MEETING TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by Chairperson McHale at 3:00 P.M.

2. ROLL CALL

Members Present: Nancy McHale (Chairperson)
Linda Rinta
Christopher Conti
Jacqui Nichols
Ronald Besse
Carl Schulz (Clerk)

Members Absent:

Also present: Ken Buckland, Director of Planning
Derek Sullivan, Town Administrator
Jim Munise, Selectman
Wendy O'Brien

Frank Mulligan, reporter from the Courier

3. Minutes to Approve

MOTION: Made and seconded to approve the Minutes of the September 15, 2021 meeting of the Solar By-Law Study Committee.

VOTE: (5-0-1)

4. Preliminary Business

a. Conflict of Interest Law

Chairperson McHale reminded everyone that they need to file a Certificate of Completion confirming that they had reviewed the State Conflict of Interest Law with the Town Clerk.

The Committee discussed this item briefly and all committed to file, if they had not already done so, the required Certificate.

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NOTE: See Section 1.4 and Appendix A of the *January 2014 Town of Wareham Committee Member Handbook*.

Chairperson McHale then reminded all members that they also need to sign and file confirmation that they have reviewed the Open Meeting Law with the Town Clerk.

NOTE: See Section 2.10 and Appendix B of the *January 2014 Town of Wareham Committee Member Handbook*.

b. Discussion of soliciting input from Experts and Advocates

The Committee agreed on the value of having input from a variety of sources and brainstormed on a possible list.

One area of input was getting information to understand why more solar projects in town over brownfield, commercial roof-tops, and commercial parking lots is not happening. All of these uses are permitted under the current by-laws.

The Committee also felt that site-visits to existing solar projects would be useful. The visits should include a selection of projects that are perceived as “successful / desirable” and those perceived as “unsuccessful / not-desirable” to identify characteristics of each.

A preliminary list of sources include:

- Solar Developers,
- Conservation Groups,
- Representative of Small Farms

NOTE: Ms. Rinta, Committee member, is uniquely qualified to speak to this item and agreed to do so if appropriate.

- Energy Consultant,

NOTE: Ms. Rinta, Committee member, has worked with an individual in town in the past and agreed to provide contact information.

- Legal Counsel.

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Action: Chairperson McHale to work with Mr. Buckland to identify resources.

c. Public Input and Citizen Comment

All Committee members agreed that having this input was critical to the success of the effort.

Chairperson McHale noted that the Committee discussions were open to public comment but we are not considered Public Hearings. To that end the Committee agreed to add a section to each meeting agenda to allow for and facilitate public comment.

Action: Chairperson McHale to add a public comment section to future Agendas.

NOTE: The final DRAFT of any updates and changes to any by-laws proposed by the Solar By-Law Study Committee will be forwarded to the Wareham Planning Board. The Planning Board will then hold Public Hearings before submitting those changes as a Warrant / Article to be approved at Town Meeting.

d. Recommendation to Wareham Board of Selectmen to fill the Citizen-at-Large position

The Committee was provided the names of two interested individuals: Ms. Jane Gleason and Ms. Wendy O'Brien. Chairperson McHale noted that she had had discussions with Ms. Gleason and informed the Committee that Ms. Gleason was also an applicant for a vacancy on the Planning Board and that would be her first choice.

The Committee discussed the applicants.

MOTION: Made and Seconded to recommend Ms. Wendy O'Brien to the Board of Selectmen to fill the Citizen-at-Large position on the Committee

VOTE: (4-0-2)

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Action: Chairperson McHale to forward the Committee recommendation to the Board of Selectmen.

5. Discussion

The Committee discussed what they had discovered since the last meeting.

In general, the Committee felt that the current by-law aligns closely with the State Model By-Law. That being said it was noted that the Model By-Law, and the Town By-Law, are both about 7-years old and do not reflect the current impacts / understanding of climate change or the evolution of technology. It was agreed that we can work to improve the current by-law, that is we do not need to scrap it and start from scratch.

It was agreed that we need to develop an inventory of the resources that we would like to “protect” through any changes. This, combined with the characteristics we note about past projects can inform the areas of change / update needed.

One resource for protection was generally agreed upon – our forested areas. It was suggested that we bring in a Forrester to discuss how forests help with carbon sequestration and to talk about how to understand the health and vitality of our current resources.

Ms. Nichols reminded the Committee that Wareham is a “Green Community”. It is important that we maintain that designation as it affords us access to State programs and funds.

The Committee discussed sand-and-gravel mining operations in cranberry bogs and the relationship of those activities to solar projects. The Committee felt that these were separate issues governed by separate sets of by-laws but did agree that language about grading and soil removal directly related to a solar project could be considered.

Mr. Sullivan and Ms. Nichols noted that solar projects represent needed revenue sources for the town and that this should be considered as we move forward.

The Committee discussed the importance of finding ways to incentivize solar projects in areas that are consistent with the vision for the town.

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Action: Committee Members to continue to review by-laws from the surrounding towns to identify successful strategies the focus solar development into areas that are consistent with the vision for the town.

6. Timeline

The Committee discussed the timeline for completing completing our work. It was noted that the final draft needs to be done in time to provide it to the Planning Board so that they can hold Public Hearings and provide the Warrant / Article to the town in time for the Spring Town Meeting.

It was agreed that the Final Draft needs to be complete not-later- than the first week of January 2022.

7. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION: Motion made and seconded to adjourn the meeting at 4:52 PM.

VOTE: (6-0-0)

8. NEXT MEETING

Wednesday, October 13, 2021

Place: Room 27

54 Marion Road

Wareham, MA 02571

Date signed: _____

Date Signed

By Carl Schulz, Oct 15, 2021 at 10:04

Attest: _____

Carl Schulz

Clerk Wareham Solar Study Committee

Date copy sent to Town Clerk: _____

Date Submitted

By Carl Schulz, Oct 15, 2021 at 10:03