

**FRANKLIN PLANNING BOARD
PUBLIC MEETING
May 12, 2021 6:00 p.m.
City Hall, Council chambers**

Minutes

Call to Order: Chairman Libertore called the meeting to order at 6:02 p.m.

Present: Planning Director Richard Lewis; Jo Brown; David Libertore, Chairman; Tim Flaherty; Kathy Lauer-Rago; David Testerman; Donna Tully; Ted Starkweather, Mayor Oliva Zink (arrived at 6:35 p.m.).

Absent: Rob Sargent; Christine Sheedy; Christine Dzujna; James DeBernardo

☐ **Pledge of Allegiance**

☐ **New Business:**

Director Lewis gave an overview of the process for a public hearing. He read a letter from Margaret Copely requesting the character of the neighborhoods be preserved, and a comment he received from Dean Laughy regarding the possibilities with conservation districts. The purpose of the meeting was to gather comments and feedback from the board and the public on a proposed solar zoning ordinance and proposed language for solar projects to be added to the Planning Board's Site Plan Regulations.

- ☐ Agenda Item # 1: Review of the draft zoning amendment for the establishment of specific language to address the location and requirements of different solar energy projects throughout the City.
- ☐ Agenda Item # 2: Review of draft language for solar projects to be added to the Planning Board's Site Plan Regulations

Chairman Libertore opened the discussion by saying that he did not see any changes necessary. He felt the proposed ordinance covered the character of neighborhoods, regulations and screening of any future projects.

Member Testerman, referring to item #3 in proposed ordinance, asked if the height of 14' could be verified. He also expressed concerns about concrete being left in decommissioning and would like to see the ordinance include a bond/decommissioning plan when a project is proposed. There was discussion about ways to calculate a cost estimate that would make that a reasonable request.

Member Flaherty agreed with Testerman about a decommissioning plan and also expressed concerns about dealing with Eversource. He felt they should sign the proposal plan. Chairman Libertore echoed the concerns about accountability for Eversource.

Member Testerman inquired about a former process for approval with Eversource projects. Director Lewis explained that the process had largely been changed to Municipal Services Department being in control of that. Testerman asked if that had been done with the Mark/Duffy project. Director Lewis will check on that. Chairman Libertore opened up the meeting to public comments.

Dean Laughy shared his concerns going forward. First, he feels any solar project proposals need to define who is financially responsible for decommissioning upfront. Second, he expressed concerns about Eversource and how to control what they do and hold them accountable. Third, he discussed that while he understands that conservation land may need to be used for solar array projects, he feels it needs to be done in such a way as to maintain the atmosphere of the area and not have poles and wires within site. Member Brown asked if he

Approved 6/23/2021

knew of projects that had been completed with underground wiring. Mr. Laughy confirmed that he knew of a number of projects in Massachusetts that were functioning that way.

Member Testerman also expressed a need to be tougher when dealing with Eversource. Chairman Libertore agreed with him and explained that having the ordinance in place will help.

Director Lewis also shared that the City had been approached to buy into the solar project in the industrial park to purchase some of the power but the City was already in a purchase agreement.

Member Testerman questioned the benefit to the City with these projects, that it seems to just be the tax base benefit.

Chris Carson also spoke and expressed concerns about the vegetation maintenance plan and that there should be no pesticides or chemicals used that will contaminate the area.

No other members of the public chose to speak.

Director Lewis summarized the comments that had been presented and making revisions. Controlling Eversource will be discussed with the City Attorney for a clearer understanding of what can be done. As far as ground-mounted equipment, it was agreed that the burden to show that it could not be done on any given project would fall to the applicant.

Mayor Zink asked if Director Lewis had reviewed the solar ordinance from Conway. He confirmed that he had but that it did not meet the standards that he was looking for.

Member Testerman again stressed the need for the ordinance to include control over projects with Eversource. Chairman Librtore agreed.

With no further comments from the public or the Board, Chairman Libertore closed the public meeting. He thanked the members of the public for their comments and input.

Adjournment:

Meeting was adjourned at 6:53 p.m. by unanimous vote.

Respectfully submitted,

Judy Bibbins

Administrative Assistant for Planning and Zoning.