

AGAWAM PLANNING BOARD
March 2, 2017

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Mark R. Paleologopoulos, Chairman
Violet E. Baldwin
Charles Elfman
Nicholas Pandolfi
Mario Tedeschi

ALSO PRESENT:

Marc Strange
Amanda Boissonneault

Mr. Paleologopoulos called the meeting to order at 6:30 PM.

1. Public Hearing – Zoning Amendment – Commercial Ground Mounted Solar Photovoltaic Installations – Planning Board

Mr. Paleologopoulos opened the public hearing and asked if anyone in attendance had any questions, comments or suggestions in regards to the proposed bylaw.

Jacques LaFlamme, 36 Cardinal Lane read a letter to the board that expressed his opposition to the installment of solar panels on the nearby property, and that all solar panel facilities should be built in landfill areas.

Doreen Prouty, 891 S. Westfield Street spoke on behalf of the Agawam Zoning Board of Appeals. Ms. Prouty said the proposed bylaw is a great starting point, but believes it should be for all solar installations. Ms. Prouty had previously submitted comments and suggestions to the Planning Board for their review, and will be available for any questions they may have.

Kevin Sullivan, 1005 North Street, Suffield, CT stated he has a problem with 180-150 Section b. which speaks about location. Mr. Sullivan does not want to see ground mounted solar PV installations restricted from agricultural land. Mr. Sullivan has ground mounted solar PV installations on part of his agricultural property, and believes it is the next generation of farming. Mr. Sullivan said he considers solar a 20-30 year crop that once completed, leaves usable soil behind for the next crop. Mr. Sullivan suggested that a size limit on how large the installation can be on agricultural land should be considered.

Carl Pinette, 143 Kosak Ct. asked if the Planning Board has sent a positive recommendation to the City Council in regards to the bylaw. Mr. Paleologopoulos stated no, all that has been sent to the City Council is their letter to sponsor the proposed bylaw after a vote on February 2, 2017.

Mr. Strange asked City Council President James Cichetti, who is in attendance, to describe the bylaw process to the audience.

Aline Stolar, 54 Kosak Ct. showed the Board members a picture of the land across from her home. Ms. Stolar said the residents do not want solar panels installed near their homes.

Mr. Paleologopoulos reminded the audience that the public hearing is about the proposed solar bylaw.

Elizabeth Maher, 53 Tobacco Farm Road asked why a solar bylaw wasn't talked about before the Eversource Energy projects. Ms. Maher questioned transparency between City officials and abutters.

Vincenzo Ronghi, 55 Avalon Place questioned 180-149 Applicability. Mr. Ronghi said he does not agree with town property being exempt and that everyone should have to abide by the same rules. Mr. Ronghi agreed with Ms. Prouty that the law should be for all solar projects. He said there are many weaknesses in the bylaw that need to be addressed.

Henry Kozloski, 102 Meadow Street stated he sees a problem with 180-49 Applicability. Mr. Kozloski explained that the Town of Agawam owns the most open space in town. Tuckahoe Turf Farm alone is approximately 300 acres. Either the town wants to exclude solar panels from agricultural land or not, there should be no exemption.

Edgar Alejandro, 103 Bairdcrest Road asked if the Planning Board has the authority to consider the site plan review for both Eversource Energy projects separately from the proposed bylaw. Mr. Paleologopoulos answered yes.

Joshua Lee Smith, Attorney for Eversource Energy, said the proposed bylaw allowing for solar projects as an allowed use in only industrial zones is too limited. Mr. Smith quoted Chapter 40A, sec. 3, which states "no zoning ordinance or by-law shall prohibit or unreasonably regulate the installation of solar energy systems or the building of structures that facilitate the collection of solar energy..." Mr. Smith is concerned about fairness to his client because both proposed solar projects on agricultural zoned parcels. Mr. Smith stated Eversource has met with city officials numerous times and acted in good faith, and asked the board to considering carving out an exemption from the bylaw for projects that were filed prior to. Mr. Smith advised that an appeal to the Zoning Board of Appeals of the Planning Board's motion on both Eversource site plans reviews has been filed.

Elizabeth Maher, 53 Tobacco Farm Road questioned transparency between City officials and abutters.

Joseph Mineo, Vice President of the Agawam City Council stated he had no knowledge of the project until 5-6 weeks ago.

Carl Pinette, 143 Kosak Ct. spoke about Massachusetts being a time of decision State, not a time of application State, and that there is an opportunity to stop the projects.

Vincenzo Ronghi, 55 Avalon Place is concerned about the restriction to only industrial zones. He is concerned about eroding the tax base and depleting available industrial areas.

Edgar Alejandro, 103 Bairdcrest Road stated Eversource Energy has been a business and land owner in Agawam for many years, and is the number one tax payer in town. Eversource has a commitment to the environment and a green commitment to the State.

Carl Pinette, 143 Kosak Ct. asked Marc Strange if he is opposed to the proposed bylaw. Mr. Strange answered that the bylaw should be written to help protect abutters, and does not achieve that at this time. Mr. Strange mentioned the solar panels that were installed on an industrial zoned parcel off of Route 57 that has abutters.

Harrison Grant, 17 Tobacco Farm Road said there may have been better results if the neighborhood was asked about the solar panel projects beforehand.

Mr. Paleologopoulos asked if there was any further public input, there was none.

Motion made by Mr. Pandolfi and seconded by Mr. Tedeschi to close the public hearing on the proposed zoning amendment.

VOTE 5-0

Mr. Paleologopoulos asked the board if any members had any comments or input. Ms. Baldwin spoke of several items she would like to see addressed, including why it is written that town owned land is exempt, putting a limit on the size of installations, reasonably shielding, lighting, emergency services, if any hazardous materials are involved or need to be handled, and who is involved with the installation process. Ms. Baldwin said that the language of the bylaw is too vague as it is and needs to be more specific. Mr. Tedeschi agreed with all of Ms. Baldwin's concerns, and asked if there can be the addition of language to grandfather in projects that have already been filed. Mr. Tedeschi asked Mr. Lee if Eversource had looked into how much industrial land was available in Agawam. Mr. Lee said there was none available at the time of application. Mr. Tedeschi also expressed concern about using up industrial property in town, creating appropriate setbacks, and the possibility of using business zoned property. Mr. Pandolfi agreed, stated more time is needed to consider what needs to be addressed in the bylaw. Mr. Paleologopoulos asked if a workshop or subcommittee could be set up with the Planning Board, City Council, ZBA, Conservation Committee and Planning Office. Council President Cichetti is in the audience, and said an agenda can be set up, needs to be posted 48 hours prior.

2. SITE PLAN – 470 Shoemaker Lane – LTM LLC

Mr. Pandolfi stated he was informed by the applicant that a revised site plan that addresses all the Engineering Department's comments would not be available in time for this meeting.

Motion made by Ms. Baldwin and seconded Mr. Pandolfi to table the Site Plan for LTM, LLC on 470 Shoemaker Lane until the next meeting.

VOTE 5-0

3. SITE PLAN – South West Street – Eversource Energy (Tabled)
4. SITE PLAN – South Westfield Street – Eversource Energy (Tabled)
5. APPROVAL OF MINUTES – January 5, February 2 & February 16, 2017

Motion was made by Mr. Tedeschi and seconded by Mr. Pandolfi to approve the January 5, 2017 minutes as written.

VOTE 4-0-1 (Elfman abstained)

Motion was made by Mr. Elfman and seconded by Mr. Pandolfi to approve the February 2, 2017 minutes as written.

VOTE 4-0-1 (Baldwin abstained)

Motion was made by Mr. Pandolfi and seconded by Ms. Baldwin to approve the February 16, 2017 minutes with the addition of one comment by Mr. Baldwin.

VOTE 5-0

6. Correspondences – None

7. FORM A – North West Street – Brown

This plan shows the creation of a building lot out of an existing parcel with frontage on North West Street.

Motion was made by Ms. Baldwin and seconded by Mr. Pandolfi to approve the plan for Brown on North West Street under “Subdivision Control Law Not Required.”

VOTE 5-0

8. FORM A – Cooper Street – Barbero

This plan shows property lines being adjusted on adjoining lots to create adequate frontage on both parcels.

Motion was made by Mr. Pandolfi and seconded by Mr. Elfman to approve the plan for Barbero on Cooper Street under “Subdivision Control Law Not Required.”

VOTE 5-0

The meeting adjourned at 8:00 PM.