

**Newfield Planning Board PUBLIC HEARING Minutes
Town of Newfield,
November 4, 2020**

Present: Gloria Dyer; Dan Phelan (voting alternate); Emily Foss

Guest: In person and on Zoom: Benjamin Buzzell (Zoom), Anthony Garrity (Zoom), Skip Tonge (Zoom) Shelly Gobeille; Paul Bourret; Norman Hutchinson (CEO); Shawn Tobey; Paul Colwell; Christian Loanger of NBD Solar Maine; Andrea Silva; Jason Neville (Fire Chief) Lorraine Gilbert, Jim Morhan of NBD Solar Maine; and Shawn Meehan

Quorum present: yes

Topic	Discussion	Decision
<u>Call to order</u>	7:01 PM	
<u>Pledge</u> <u>Introduction</u>	Purpose of the meeting is to inform and obtain input from community regarding Project proposal submitted by NBD Solar Maine, LLC.	Christian Loranger filled out an application for a conditional use permit to install a 4.990 megawatt AC ground-mounted solar array consisting of 11,925 solar-collecting panels and associated electrical equipment on the 15 acre property located at 66 Water Street, Newfield, Maine.
<u>Public Comment</u>	Site Walk was conducted on October 31 st . There were seventeen people there consisting of ten community members, three planning board members, property owners, and a project manager.	Additional submittals have been requested and received by the planning board since the initial application, including a decommissioning plan and a cost estimate, as well as a hydrological analysis.
<u>New Business</u> <u>SBD Solar Maine LLC</u> <u>Map 22 Lot. 4.1</u>	Christian Loranger, Project Manager of NBD Solar Maine gave a brief review of the proposed project. Situated at the site previously used by Moulton Lumber, he explained that the goal was to maintain a low-impact site that would not affect the environment as much as possible. He continued to explain how the panels would be installed and how the fencing and vegetation buffers would be put in. The floor was given to Christian Loranger, who proceeded to explain what would be needed to work with Central Maine Power. He stated that they would only need to add five or six telephone poles and additional equipment, that in case of emergencies,	Planning board members had no comments or questions at this point.

<p><u>Questions</u></p>	<p>a “Knox Box” would be made available to emergency personnel and local law enforcement, and the installation of a “Bifacial” panels to collect solar power efficiently. He stated that all of this would be figured into the cost of the project, and would profit the town by upgrading the powerlines, grid, and tax revenue.</p> <p><u>How is this going to be taxed?</u></p> <p><u>How will the town benefit from this plan? What is the benefit to the taxpayers?</u></p> <p><u>In case of emergency, will emergency personnel need special training in order to deal with electrical emergencies?</u></p> <p><u>What happens to panels after twenty-five years?</u></p> <p><u>What is required to maintain the panels?</u></p>	<p>At this point the floor was opened to the community both in person and via Zoom for questions, which Shawn Meehan and Mr. Loranger answered.</p> <p>Mr. Loranger explained how NBD Solar Maine pays the town of Newfield the agreed upon taxes in a predetermined installment over the course of 25 years.</p> <p>Mr. Loranger stated that the money that NBD Solar Maine pays will offset the revenue for the town. He went on to explain that there is a “Community Solar Plan” available to the town that will allow them to reap the benefits of the solar array. He continues by saying that the power goes to a substation in Limerick, and that all of the facilities and equipment will need to be upgraded, which will be done by NBD Solar Maine, which will result in more power and better facilities.</p> <p>Mr. Loranger states that they will provide training to emergency personnel, but in the case of a fire, there is very little in the solar panel that will actually burn, and that there will be a “Knox Box” of keys available to first responders in case of emergencies.</p> <p>Mr. Loranger explains that panels are only good for twenty-five years, and in the case where something happens to them, they are recycled through a separate entity, they do not get left to the community.</p> <p>Mr. Loranger states that in the Northeast there is no need to clean the panels (as it is in more arid locations) because the natural precipitation is enough to keep the panels clean and free of dirt. They mow under the panels twice a year, and they do not use herbicides or pesticides in the grass around the panels. He goes on to state that older grids like the ones located in Newfield are</p>
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<p><u>Questions (cont.):</u></p>	<p><u>Is it possible to direct some of the power going to the substation to the fire department?</u></p> <p><u>Is Central Maine Power (CMP) going to be adding anything to our bills? Will we now have to get two bills?</u></p> <p><u>What is the insurance plan when one of the trees in the proposed buffer die?</u></p> <p><u>Will we be eligible for Community Solar Panels and not deal with CMP?</u></p> <p><u>How much tax will be paid to the town? A specific dollar amount?</u></p> <p><u>What is the ballpark monetary liability to the town?</u></p> <p><u>So, you are asking for approval for a project, but you don't have a rough estimate of what the cost will be?</u></p>	<p>inefficient, and that where many cars will soon be powered by electricity, having solar panels and upgraded grids are going to be a boon to the community.</p> <p>Mr. Loranger states that there is a program that the fire department can be put on.</p> <p>Mr. Loranger explains that the benefit to solar energy is that the price does not fluctuate. It costs the same amount to harvest the electrons, whereas power companies that rely on gas-powered facilities are at the mercy of oil companies. Regarding Central Maine Power's billing procedures, he could make no comment.</p> <p>NBD is contractually obligated to replace a tree if it dies.</p> <p>Mr. Loranger explains that they have difficulty dealing with utility companies as well.</p> <p>Mr. Loranger explains that if the PILOT Program is voted in, it has to be voted on by the selectmen, and that there is a specific formula that the assessor has to follow. It has a starting point that the assessor uses, and they present it to the selectmen. He was unable to elaborate on the formula or amount outside of that.</p> <p>Mr. Loranger stated that once everything is finalized, they would be able to determine a cost at that point.</p> <p>Mr. Loranger explained that the cost to start the Pilot Program is "fairly expensive", and that they would have to start "step by step", but that it was difficult to negotiate a price without having the approval of the project. It was then stated by one of the board members that they could make the approval to the Pilot Program conditional to the tax amount if it can't be agreed upon, but it still has to be voted on by the selectmen.</p>
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<p><u>Questions (cont.):</u></p>	<p><u>Can you give an example of a relative town project and how much they received in revenue?</u></p> <p><u>Is this an example where the money is paid to the state, and then the state pays the money to the town?</u></p> <p><u>It makes a big difference to the town whether there is twenty or twenty-five years that you depreciate the tax infrastructure, when the selectmen vote, they won't have a negator except the twenty to twenty-five year range.</u></p> <p><u>Will there be an irrigation system tied into the drilled well, as there are concerns about the appearance and aesthetics of capping and cutting it? We did some research about the recycling of the panels, and there is no federal guidelines in place because they have no value. Hopefully there will be guidelines in place by the time these panels need to be recycled so that they don't end up in a landfill.</u></p> <p><u>When can we find out about the irrigation system and keeping vegetation buffer alive?</u></p>	<p>Mr. Loranger stated that he could not cite any specific examples in Maine, but in Massachusetts there was a town with a 3.2-megawatt project, and they were getting paid \$27,000.</p> <p>No, the money is paid directly to the town. Mr. Loranger proceeds to state that although he can't speak directly about how Newfield is run, he knows that in other towns the money goes directly into a general fund.</p> <p>He proceeds to elaborate on a previous question about separate bills and the difficulty of dealing with utility companies. Due to the fact that the oversight is done through the State of Maine, and they want this project to succeed, they have forced utility companies to "toe the line" on both ends. He maintains that working with utility companies is still difficult, but mandates are forcing companies to tighten their business practices.</p> <p>Mr. Loranger states that the land cannot depreciate in value. He also explains that there is a travelling assessor who comes to evaluate the project and has a formula to base his assessments on.</p> <p>Mr. Loranger stated that he has seen single-stream plants in every town's transfer stations to break the panels into their individual parts.</p> <p>Mr. Loranger explains that he is paying for the trees and does not want them to die, and that he irrigates everything that he plants, so if he can use the well, he absolutely will.</p>
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<p><u>Questions (cont.):</u></p>	<p><u>Can you come back to the December meeting? We would like more information on the double-sided panels and how you can ensure that the project will not be affecting our water aquifer.</u></p> <p><u>I watched the Waterboro hearing, and you didn't mention the "sundowning" issue a few weeks ago, and you weren't going to start that project until spring. I am just curious why there didn't seem to be a rush to start that project but there is a rush all of a sudden for this one?</u></p>	<p>Mr. Loranger says he would be willing to do that, but states that he is running out of time with the project. He explains that there is an "ITC", which is a federal tax credit and says that it is "sun-downing", which means that it is going away. He elaborates further that when the process started, it was at 30%, and this year went down to 20%. After December, it will drop another 3%, which will begin to kill the project. If no decision is made in December, he continues, then he can no longer "Safe Harbor" the project, which involves the purchase of materials.</p> <p>Mr. Loranger explains she is misinterpreting what she saw. He says that he was confident that the project could begin and could purchase the materials for the project within the next couple of weeks, so could use the ITC available this year, but is unable to buy materials for projects that have not been approved and decided on.</p>
<p><u>Other Items</u></p>	<p>A Special Meeting might be held in November for a Public Hearing.</p>	
<p>Public Hearing adjourned</p>	<p>8:10 PM</p>	

Typed by: BR