

Mansfield Light Commission Minutes
October 29, 2014

Present: Jess Aptowitz; Chairman, Olivier Kozlowski; Vice Chairman, Frank DelVecchio; Clerk, Doug Annino, George Dentino and William Ross; Town Manager

1. Meeting Called To Order At 8:10 PM

Chairman Aptowitz called the meeting to order. Chairman Aptowitz reminded that this meeting is being broadcast live by Mansfield Cable Access and taped for future broadcast and noted that the Commission initially met as Selectmen prior to this meeting.

2. Citizen Comments

None.

3. Director's Report

Proposed Branch Street Solar Development – Discussion of a Proposed Residential and Solar Development on Branch Street at the Former Site of Campo Chemical

Mr. Ross reported that the Town was approached in June by local attorney Ed Valanzola and his clients, Dan Russell of Sears Point Development and Joseph Lynch of the Winterton Corporation, about installing a solar energy facility on Branch Street at the former Campo Chemical site. The Town asked the group to provide an outline of what would be done at the site and for information that the Mansfield Municipal Electric Department (MMED) could analyze to determine if MMED would be interested in buying the electrical output of the facility.

Mr. Ross noted that Gary Babin, MMED Director, put together two purchasing scenarios, which were included in the Board package. The two scenarios were 1.0 MW (AC) and 1.5 MW (AC) capacity installations, which started at different prices per kWh and both of which had the same price escalator over the term of the 25 year agreement. Mr. Ross explained that when looking at the option of 1.5 MW, the purchase power agreement would be \$.064/kWh with 1.75% annual escalator for 25 years, which he felt works out well in terms of energy cost and is at or below what the Town can buy power for off the grid considering the transmission cost. He did explain that it is too difficult to project what the actual cost of power on the grid would be after 25 years but can look at trends and it appears the price is reasonable. The group also offered to fund an interconnection study to see if the MMED system could accommodate the installation, they agreed to pay upgrade costs associated with the installation and also to make an annual PILOT payment to the Town.

Mr. Ross explained that this is a policy issue for the Commission from the standpoint of whether this is something that MMED might be interested in pursuing. He also stated that the Town is in a different situation as it owns and operates its municipal electric department, which requires that the

entire output of the facility be sold to MMED. He went on to note that MMED was asked if the system could absorb 1.5 MW at this location, which based on the analysis MMED performed it is able to do.

Chairman Aptowitz noted that he lives on Fieldstone Drive but felt that since he was not an abutter he could participate in the discussion.

Mr. Valanzola introduced Mr. Russell and Mr. Lynch to the Commission as well Jonathan Abe, Blackstone Solar, a technical consultant to the project. Mr. Valanzola felt there have been productive meetings held with Mr. Ross and Gary Babin regarding entering into a power agreement with the Town. In addition to the points Mr. Ross reviewed, Mr. Valanzola noted that the current site, designated as a federal brownfield location, is an eyesore. Mr. Valanzola stated there will be a residential component to the plan along with the solar farm and that the group intends to go forward with site plan review to address any issues that may come up. He felt one of the positive features of the plan was that the overall height of the panels was non-intrusive since the panels basically lie flat facing the sun. He also noted that this appears to be the best proposed use of that location he had seen.

Mr. Lynch presented a layout of the land that his firm will be purchasing, which they currently have under contract with the present owner IRG, LLC, a group out of Colorado. IRG has been working on the site for six to eight years going through extensive clean up with the State to satisfy both State and Federal regulations. Mr. Lynch is very confident with the clean-up of the site and that it can be purchased for an alternative use. Mr. Lynch stated that the site is 25 acres, where 11.5 acres will be designated residential with frontage on Branch Street but that it also contains some wetlands.

The remaining portion has been designated an isolated industrial parcel which he felt could be used as a solar site. Mr. Lynch also noted that an area within that portion (5 acres) contains a Massachusetts DEP Activities and Use Limitation (AUL), which does not allow residential use or any excavations on the site. He indicated that this fits in well with solar as everything is ground mounted with concrete ballasts that would hold the solar panels in place. The solar panels would be laid in rows and face south. He explained that the plan before the Commission is preliminary and more engineering work is still needed (i.e. heights of trees, definition of wetlands, etc.).

Chairman Aptowitz asked Mr. Ross what is it that the Commission is being asked to do this evening. Mr. Ross stated that he is looking for an indication from the Commission to continue pursuing this project, which would mean working towards a purchase power agreement. Mr. Ross also noted that because there are residential neighborhoods around this site and the Town is sensitive to that, there should be a discussion in a public meeting with additional input.

Mr. Valanzola felt this to be an introduction to the project where he fully expected a public hearing and site plan review to still be conducted.

Mr. Kozlowski stated that the Town has seen better proposals. He also noted there was no delineation in terms of where the 1 MW and 1.5 MW were on the plans and how different each would look. Mr. Lynch noted a more detailed plan could be expected once the engineering work

was completed which included definition of wetlands and tree height. He further explained that the intent is to have 30 feet of buffering on Branch Street with a combination of fence and landscaping as the maximum height of the panels are about six feet. Mr. Kozlowski was concerned that the bike path is located directly behind the proposed site location and with recent issues regarding tree removals in order to meet Federal aviation rules. With that in mind he asked what can residents expect to see from the bike path, to which Mr. Lynch responded that he has been in talks with residents in that area but confirmed there are trees between the two areas that are outside of the site's control.

Mr. Annino stated while he respects the Planning Board and its site review process he fully expects to see an overall plan of this site, including elevations and perspectives. And while he may agree in concept, Mr. Annino would still like to see the details to make sure it does not adversely affect any of the surrounding parcels or present risk to travelers utilizing Branch Street. Mr. Annino asked how many acres are expected to be solar paneled to which Mr. Lynch expects about 5 acres. With regards to the rate sheet, Mr. Annino asked if the Interconnection Study and Upgrade Cost would be borne by the developer to which Mr. Ross stated it would be tying into the Town's system and those costs would be borne by them.

With regards to the PILOT Mr. Annino noted they will be paying taxes but asked how that relates to an industrial development building. Mr. Ross noted taxes on a solar installation would be lower than a building and there has been some talk in the Legislature of exempting solar from property taxes, which is why the Town is looking at the PILOT. Mr. Annino asked if the Town would be losing money to which Mr. Ross noted the land would always be taxable but was unsure if the panels were taxable. Mr. Aptowitz pointed out that the PILOT notes "including real and personal property". Mr. Lynch noted there are two areas of value, one for residential and one for commercial. Mr. Annino would like to review this more to see what the savings to electricity would be and what the loss is on taxing on the lower rate.

Mr. Aptowitz noted that the word polluted has been mentioned a few times this evening and thought the land was supposed to have been cleaned. Mr. Ross answered that the site has been cleaned to a commercial/industrial level. Mr. Lynch followed up by stated the site has been cleaned and that a risk analysis was conducted which resulted in the AUL.

Mr. Annino commented that the Board will need a fiscal as well as an aesthetic analysis. Mr. Annino asked if there was a limit on the amount of solar that can be developed in Town, to which Mr. Ross noted that the limit is just for private development to be used on their own property. Mr. Babin noted the difference is that the Town offers net metering for commercial installations that includes a rate the Town will pay the customer whereas this is a purchase power agreement that would be separate and distinct.

Mr. DelVecchio asked for information on the solar panels and their environmental impact. Mr. Abe noted these are silicon materials encased in glass with plastic coating and aluminum frames which are all recyclable and landfill materials. In response to a question of what happens at the end of the contract, Mr. Babin explained that typical arrangements are for developers to turn the panels over to the Town or for the Town to require a bond that would cover the cost of removal if the developer were to leave, which is what was required with the solar landfill contract.

Mr. Dentino could see this process progressing slowly and agreed with Mr. Annino's thought of the importance of seeing the entire plan, especially aesthetics. Mr. Dentino noted the Commission owes it to the neighbors and the Town to be cautious.

Chairman Aptowitz was concerned with regards to the inverter and its noise. He referenced the substation on Bird Road and noted the concerns of the neighbors about the aesthetics and sound and the amount of time and money the Town spent researching that. He felt that the Commission would need to be extremely cautious. Mr. Lynch appreciated the feedback and stated he is listening to the Commission's concerns and would come back with an overall aesthetic plan. Mr. Valanzola noted this is a challenging topic and looked forward to working with the Commission.

4. Comments From Commissioners

None.

5. Any Items Not Anticipated By The Chairman 48 Hours Prior To This Meeting

None.

6. Adjournment

Motion: To adjourn Light Commission meeting 8:50 PM (Kozlowski/DelVecchio) PASSES 5:0



Signature of Clerk
/Tracey Whalen

1-21-15

Date of Approval