



Town of South Thomaston, Maine
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Planning Board Minutes, September 15, 2022
In-Person Meeting at the Town Office, with Zoom Video Conferencing

1. Roll Call. Board Members in attendance: Ervin Curtis, Cindy Ginn, Catherine Lerne
Also present: Bryan Calderwood, Fire Chief, and Dan Dates, Code Enforcement Officer

Board Members not present: Gabriel Tomasulo
Attendees via Zoom: Stephen Betts, Richard Jansen

2. Meeting Called to Order by Ervin Curtis, Chair, at 5:30PM.

3. Public Comment. Two homeowners on Hollyberry Lane, whose property abuts the proposed solar farm, attended the meeting and asked questions: if they want to sell their house, must the fact that it is adjacent to a solar farm be disclosed? In the opinion of the Planning Board (PB), it does not. Will the farm lower their property values? Again, in the opinion of the PB, it will not. Each homeowner on Hollyberry received notification by mail about the project.

4. Adjustment to the Agenda. None.

5. New Business.

A) TRC Solar: Map 7 Lot 19, Map 7 Lot 21, Route 131 & Birch Lane (no street number has been assigned yet). Heather Ward, Project Manager & Senior Wetland Scientist at TRC Companies, along with "Mark" from Summit Ridge Energy, were present to answer questions about the solar project. Summit Ridge currently has 30 plans in Maine and is leasing Lots 19 and 21 from Russ Odone and Scott Appleby, respectively, for a period of 20 years. The cost of developing the solar farm is approximately \$3-5 million dollars, with the panels – the life expectancy of which is 25 years – being the most expensive component. When approvals are in place, work is expected to begin during Spring 2023 and will take 3-6 months to complete.

The panels will be situated on 19.9 acres in the center of the two parcels of land totaling 215 acres in South Thomaston's R1 Zone, the town's least restrictive zone. This central positioning will ensure that nothing is seen by neighbors or motorists, and there should be few if any adverse environmental impacts. There are limited wetlands, no wells or septic systems on site, and all culverts will be maintained. No landscaping is required, and a low maintenance grass seed mix will be used, free of herbicides and pesticides. Mowing will take place twice a year.

If a grass fire should erupt it would be self-limiting, and the fire department will have access, even though the property will be securely fenced with high voltage electrical wiring, warning signs, and an 800-telephone number. Extra footage has been allocated around the fence line to protect neighboring homes. Summit Ridge has met with Fire Chief Calderwood, adhered to his recommendations, and the Chief stated that fire UTVs and trucks will not drive through the wetlands.

At 6:10PM the Board commenced with the Performance Standard Review of the application, which is officially named South Thomaston PV, LLC, 1515 Wilson Blvd., Arlington, VA. The PB ascertained that Summit Ridge has or will have all required permits, and meets or exceeds requirements regarding effects on wildlife, and distancing from fencing to the wetlands. It is a commercial not industrial venture, there will be no lighting, and no permanent staff (only service calls by electricians, if needed). Noise levels will not exceed 65 decibels, and there will be no blasting. Summit Ridge must also supply the code compliance bond to our CEO and satisfy all state and federal regulations.

Chair Curtis made a motion to approve the Performance Standard Review, permitting the solar farm contingent on the conditions specified. Catherine Lerme seconded the motion, and it was unanimously approved.

B) Aric Odone, Map 7, Lot 19-4, 19 Birch Lane. Mr. Odone, whose property is in the R1 Zone, wants to host outdoor garden parties and small weddings, for a maximum of 50-75 attendees, with outside catering and parking to accommodate 45 cars. Guests would drive up Birch Lane. This would be a commercial enterprise, with one mobile restroom or porta-potty (although Catherine remarked that this might not be enough). Mr. Odone does not want to build anything, and there will not be any fireworks. He would like to start the business in 2023.

The brief presentation to the PB was an initial review with no voting. Ervin suggested deferring the proposal until December, to ensure there is a quorum, since he might not be able to attend the meetings in October and November. He was uncertain as to whether a public hearing would be warranted, but Catherine said that all the abutters would have to be notified. Dan Dates indicated that from the CEO standpoint, he does not foresee any difficulty.

After this, Catherine made a motion to approve the bylaws of the Board. Ervin seconded the motion, and it was unanimously approved.

6. Establish action items for the next Planning Board meeting to be scheduled. No items were initiated. The next meeting will be on October 20 at 6PM, followed by meetings on November 17 and December 15.

7. Adjourn. A motion to adjourn was made at 7:00PM by Catherine, seconded by Ervin. The motion passed.