



Hubbardston Massachusetts

Planning Board Meeting Minutes

Date: March 29, 2023

Location: 7 Main Street, Slade Building, Hubbardston, MA 01452

Members Present: Kristofer Munroe, Francois Steiger, Bill Homans, John DeMalia, Erica Dack

Other Attendees: Mike Stoll
Bob Hatch, Open Space Committee Chair

- 1) Call to Order – 6:32 pm
- 2) Chair Munroe calls for any public comments on non-agenda items. None

Chair Munroe announces the appointment of Erica Dack by the Select Board to the open full member seat on the Planning Board. The newly open associate member seat has been advertised on the Town website.

- 3) Public Hearing:
Motion to open the public hearing by member Homans, seconded by Member DeMalia, approved unanimously with five affirmative votes.

The Hubbardston Planning Board is holding a public hearing regarding the following proposed changes to Article 20 of the Hubbardston Zoning Bylaw, Use of Large-Scale Solar Photovoltaic Installations: 1) Increase of minimum lot size to 5 acres; 2) Additional required documents for site plan review; 3) Modified requirements for setbacks, screening, fencing, and dark sky-compliant lighting; and 4) Prohibition on use of pesticides or herbicides. Copies of the actual language of the proposed amendments are available for review on the Town website on the Planning Board page, or as PDF files by email request to plan@hubbardstonma.us. All interested parties are invited to attend. Published in The Gardner News 3/15/2023, 3/23/2023

Chair Munroe steps through the proposed amendments. The Board discusses the relationship between the Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) definition in this article, versus the definition in the dedicated GS-BESS bylaw Article 23. Chair Munroe indicates that for statutory construction, the two definitions will stand independently with regard to any issues that might arise in the specific context of either article.

The Board discusses the proposed amendments for increased setback distances. Member Steiger indicates that the language "Screening/Buffering may require greater setbacks (see Section 20.3.10.2(c))." was an extraneous explanatory and editorial comment that should not have been included in the amendment language. The Board agrees to delete this language from the proposed amendments.

Chair Munroe asks whether there are any questions from the public, or if Board members have any issues that require further discussion. Mike Stoll requests clarification on the applicability of the new lot size requirement. Chair Munroe clarifies that the increase from 2 acres to 5 acres is for large-scale installations only; it would not affect residential-scale solar systems.

On a motion by Member Homans, seconded by Member Steiger, the public hearing is closed by unanimous vote.

Member Steiger presents a motion to approve the proposed amendments to Article 20 of the Zoning Bylaw, as modified by discussions during the hearing, and to forward them to the Select Board with a recommendation for inclusion on the Annual Town Meeting warrant. The motion is seconded by member DeMalia. The amendments and recommendation are approved unanimously with five affirmative votes.

4) Administrative matters:

a. Approval of PB Report to Select Board on miscellaneous zoning bylaw amendments

Member Homans presents a motion to forward the previously approved miscellaneous bylaw amendments to the Select Board with a recommendation for inclusion on the Annual Town Meeting warrant. The motion is seconded by Member DeMalia. The Planning Board report and recommendation is approved unanimously with five affirmative votes.

b. Master Plan and Open Space & Recreation Plan (OSRP) completion status

Clerk Kresge explains that the Open Space Committee is currently working on an updated OSRP, which includes data that are more current and accurate than those contained in the previously approved Master Plan chapters on Land Use and Open Space. He suggests that the Board may want to consider whether they wish to make changes to the previously approved chapters. Bob Hatch, Open Space Committee Chair joins the discussion. Chair Munroe volunteers to act as liaison between the two plan processes; Mr. Hatch and the Board members are all in favor of him acting in this role.

Member Steiger would like to know if the OSRP has an inventory of State-owned land that is used specifically for watershed purposes. Mr. Hatch confirms that this is included in the OSRP. Member Steiger elaborates on his interest in the current Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILOT) structure for watershed land, indicating that he does not feel that it is commensurate with the full value of the water being provided to the Boston metropolitan area by undeveloped land in Hubbardston and other watershed communities.

5) Matters Not Reasonably Anticipated by Chair

a. Chair Munroe notifies the Board that a Special Permit application for a cell tower has been received, and that in-house staffing capability, consulting needs, and possible scheduling are being explored.

The meeting adjourned at 7:04.

Respectfully submitted,
Mark Kresge
Land Use Clerk