

NEWRY PLANNING BOARD
MINUTES OF BOARD MEETING
Wednesday, September 20, 2023
Raymond C. Foster Municipal Building

Full discussion on topics below is available on audio recording at the Newry Town Office.

Members Present: John (aka Gootsch) Gauthier (Board Chair), Bruce Pierce (Board Vice Chair), Ted Baker (Secretary)

Staff Present:

Members & Staff Absent: Joelle Corey (Code Enforcement Officer)

Call to Order: Chairman John Gauthier called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM.

Current Attendance/Quorum: The Chair took attendance and confirmed the presence of a quorum.

Prior Attendance/Voting Eligibility: Bruce was absent at the last meeting. He noted that he has not yet listened to the audio recording; however, the Board did not have any applications in front of them for that meeting. Therefore, all members are eligible to vote at this meeting.

Previous Meeting's Minutes: The Board reviewed the previous meeting's minutes. **Ted moved to accept the minutes as written for the meeting that was held on September 6, 2023. Gootsch seconded. The motion passed with Gootsch and Ted voting in favor; Bruce abstained.**

Business

- a) **Signing of Findings of Fact - Sunday River Skiway Corp's Site Plan for Golf Cart Storage Building at 18 Championship Drive, Map R17 Lot 2A-1:** The Board proceeded to review the corrected Findings of Fact. The Chair then signed with Bruce witnessing his signature. One copy will be placed in the Town's files, and one will be sent to the applicant for their records.
- b) **Working Session for Solar Energy System UDRO Updates:** The Board reviewed literature that was distributed by Ted at the last meeting regarding solar power regulations and solar farms. Ted noted that he has not had time to work on proposed language for the ordinance. The Board discussed the difference between residential and commercial solar systems.

The group discussed areas of agricultural soil within the Town of Newry as well as locations of three-phase power and where commercial organizations may be interested in placing a solar farm or a midscale/large scale solar energy system. The Board spoke about the various districts – prohibiting solar energy facilities in the Rural District and restricting them to just the Resort Development District and General Development District.

When Bruce and Gootsch asked if this exercise was premature and if the Town had been contacted by any companies inquiring about installing a solar farm in Newry, Ted explained his recommendation to establish a protocol for a solar energy facility and avoid the Board creating language for the ordinance as a knee-jerk reaction once the Board is contacted by a potential applicant. Ted spoke of two performance standards created as a reaction to expressed interest – wind towers and mineral extraction. When there is something that the Board would like to protect in Newry, then he suggests that the Board work to draft a performance standard ahead of time, much like the exercise the Board recently completed regarding campgrounds.

The group discussed other solar farms in the area and around the State – near the Bethel/Greenwood town line on Rt 26, on Rt 2 in West Bethel, as well as solar farms in Gray, Monmouth, and Farmington.

It was emphasized that the performance standard would apply to commercial solar facilities and not residential solar systems.

It was noted that having a performance standard for solar energy facilities would allow the Town to have stricter requirements for buffers and screens than those currently in place for subdivisions and site plans.

Following discussion, Ted stated that he will continue his work on drafting the language for a proposed performance standard for the ordinance for review at a future meeting, which may or may not be the Board's next meeting.

CEO Reports - none

Open Discussion

- a) Ted will follow up with Joelle regarding the proposed language for the Telecommunications Facility ordinance being forwarded to AVCOG. Ted noted that he had not found any language about camouflaged towers and is unsure how to word that in the proposed performance standard.
- b) It was noted that the cover page for the new application (10.cover) should have an area for the project name or applicant's name to be added. Ted will add a "for Planning Board use" block as well as an area for an applicant's name & short title to be added to that sheet.
- c) Gootsch spoke about the discovery of an old volcano on the Oregon/Washington state line which has 125 million tons of lithium in it; Gootsch read that the amount of lithium found could possibly upset the whole lithium market. Ted noted that there is also one discovered in the Arizona and New Mexico area, and unlike the one found in our area, has an easier, more environmentally friendly extraction process. With these two discoveries in mind, perhaps interest in the Plumbago lithium deposit will diminish.
- d) The group discussed the Certificate of Completion Freedom of Access Act required training sheets that were placed on the table for each Board Member and perhaps the Recording Secretary to sign. These should be signed and returned to the Town Office at the Board's next meeting. It was unclear if the recording secretary was required to sign this document; Becky will contact Retta tomorrow to clarify.
- e) Discussion also ensued regarding the seminars/training sessions that Maine Municipal Association has historically held for Planning Board members. Ted stated that he plans to attend next month's training for Planning Boards – Bruce also expressed interest. Ted stated that there is also a web-based seminar scheduled for December.

Next Scheduled Meeting – Wednesday, October 4, 2023 – 6pm

Adjournment – Ted moved to adjourn this meeting of the Planning Board for Newry and reconvene on October 4th at 6 o'clock. Bruce seconded. Motion passed with all voting in favor. The meeting adjourned at 7:10 PM.