

Shaftsbury Planning Commission

January 24, 2023

In person at Cole Hall and remotely via Zoom.

1) Call to order

The meeting came to order at 6 p.m. Present were commissioners Chris Williams (chair), Mike Foley, Martha Cornwell, Nancy Burns, and Naomi Miller. Zoning administrator Shelly Stiles and Bennington County Regional Commission planner Janet Hurley were also present. A nearly standing-room only crowd of citizens were present and many more citizens attended via Zoom, all hoping to discuss a proposed solar project on Holy Smoke Road.

2) Mr. Foley moved to approve the December minutes. Ms. Miller seconded the motion, which passed 3-0-2.

3) Solar project, Holy Smoke Road

Mr. Williams moved Other Business and the opportunity it provided for public comments ahead on the agenda. He set aside thirty minutes for public comment. He said the Planning Commission had only recently been made aware of the project. While it is the Public Utility Commission that approves or denies such project, the Planning Commission will certainly offer an opinion.

Speakers in person and via Zoom were:

Kit Ausschnitt

Andrea Bacchi

Tony D’Nofrio

Jim Poole

Eleanor of Trumbull Hill Road

Ken Harrington

Reed Wills

Rich Jorgensen

It was agreed to try to set up a second meeting to hear public comments at the Elementary School, and using CAT-TV. Information regarding the meeting will be shared via the town website and announcements on various online forums.

4) Select Board/Planning Commission discussion re Holy Smoke Road issues

Select chair Art Whitman, attending via Zoom, said that he hoped to get out a joint statement to the Public Utility Commission (PUC) asking that it impose a requirement that the integrity of Town roads is maintained during construction of the solar project, should it occur. He said he thought such a statement would have to be filed within forty-five days of the PUC’s acceptance of the formal application. Janet Hurley said the Town would have months in which to make comments. It was pointed out that until the application has been filed, there is really no PUC “folder” to which such comments could be directed.

5) Bylaw modernization grant

Janet Hurley reminded the commission that the Regional Commission had received a grant to work to update the town’s bylaws to make it easier to create affordable housing. She said she will review and mark-up the bylaws to that end and share with the PC.

ZA Stiles will send Ms. Hurley copies of all proposed bylaw changes adopted to date by the Planning Commission for 2023 and 2024 Town Meetings.

ZA Stiles will reach out to Joh Broker-Campbell to ask him to review the floodplain bylaw in the context of new federal rules. If he has changes to suggest, BCRC can help the Town make them.

6) Other business

Ms. Burns will contact CAT-TV. Ms. Coleman will contact the school. February 7 and 8 would work as dates. Mr. Williams noted the PC budget could cover the costs of a school janitor for meeting night.

The next regular meeting of the PC will be held February 21.

The meeting adjourned at 7:30 p.m.