

Fulton County Planning Board
Fulton County Planning Office
1 East Montgomery Street | Johnstown, NY 12095

Tuesday, February 15, 2022
8:45 a.m.

Meeting Notes

Present:

Peter Goderie, Vice Chairman
James Anderson, Member
Frederick Bochenek, Member
Jerry Moore, Member
John Kessler, Member
Dave Rackmyre, Jr., Member
Tracy Gutowski, Member

Sean Geraghty, Planning Consultant
Aaron Enfield, Sr. Planner

1. Approval of Minutes to the December 21, 2021 Meeting:

MOTION: To approve the minutes to the December 21, 2021 meeting.

MADE BY: James Anderson
SECONDED: Dave Rackmyre
VOTE: Unanimous

2. Annual Election of Officers:

The County Planning Board Bylaws stipulate that a Chairman and Vice-Chairman will be elected during the first meeting of each year.

PLANNING BOARD ACTION:

MOTION: To nominate Dave Rackmyre to serve as Chairman of the County Planning Board for 2022.

MADE BY: James Anderson
SECONDED: John Kessler
VOTE: Unanimous

MOTION: To nominate James Anderson to serve as Vice Chairman of the County Planning Board For 2022.

MADE BY: John Kessler
SECONDED: Tracy Gutowski
VOTE: Unanimous

3. General Municipal Law:

In accordance with New York State General Municipal Law § 239-m, the following applications were forwarded to the County Planning Board for review:

A. Town of Johnstown Planning Board – Special Permit for Solar Array along County Highway 116

Bluewave Solar would like to construct a 5 megawatt Solar Farm on property located at 865 County Highway 116 (Tax Map Parcel No. 173.-1-8). The existing property is approximately 88+/- acres in size. The area of disturbance for the Solar Farm will be approximately 28+/- acres.

PLANNING BOARD DISCUSSION: County Planning Consultant Sean Geraghty explained to Board members that, given the location of the solar arrays on the property, it is unlikely that the panels will be visible from any public road or any residences within the community.

PLANNING BOARD ACTION:

MOTION: Recognizing no regional implications that could occur from Blue Wave Solar's Special Permit Application for a Solar Farm along County Highway 116 and to offer no recommendation to the Town of Johnstown Planning Board.

MADE BY: John Kessler

SECONDED: Peter Goderie

VOTE: Unanimous

B. Town of Johnstown Planning Board – Special Permit for Solar Array along County Highway 116A

Bluewave Solar is proposing to develop a 5 megawatt Solar Farm along County Highway 116A in the Town of Johnstown (Tax Map Parcel No. 173.-1-68). The project site is approximately 116+/- acres in size. The area of impact on the property is approximately 31+/- acres.

PLANNING BOARD DISCUSSION: Mr. Geraghty pointed out that there is one (1) vantage point along County Highway 116A coming north from Montgomery County, where the solar arrays will be visible. Mr. Geraghty stated that the applicants are proposing some minor landscaping off of the road in order to address the issue. Mr. Geraghty speculated that the Town of Johnstown Planning Board will likely ask for additional landscaping.

Planning Board Member Jerry Moore asked if any prime agricultural soils will be impacted by the projects?

Mr. Geraghty stated that all three (3) of the Solar Farm proposals in the Town of Johnstown will involve impacts to prime agricultural land. Mr. Geraghty pointed out that the applicants are working with a private consultant in the academic field who will be putting together individual plans for each of the sites on how agricultural opportunities can continue to be pursued on the properties. Mr. Geraghty speculated that the Town of Johnstown Planning Board does not want to see prime agricultural soils impacted unless agricultural operations can continue to take place. Mr. Geraghty stated that he has explained to the applicants that a plan for using each of the properties for dual purposes will need to be presented to the Town of Johnstown Planning Board in order to address the issue involving the impacted prime agricultural soil. Mr. Geraghty briefly talked about several examples the applicants presented to the Town of Johnstown Planning Board involving dual purpose agricultural operations such as strawberry fields, pumpkin fields, wildflower plantings for pollinators etc.

Planning Board Member Pete Goderie asked if the plantings will be between the rows of solar panels?

Mr. Geraghty indicated that they likely would be between the rows of solar panels. He explained that the panels will tilt during the course of the day to capture sunlight so when the panels are parallel to the earth's surface, there will be approximately 54 inches of clearance. He indicated that any dual purpose agricultural operation will need to be limited to proposals that involve plants that grow closer to the ground. Several Planning Board members expressed the opinion that there are probably no regional implications that could result from the proposed project but suggested that the applicants be given a list of plant species that will grow well in this climate and on these types of particular soils and will provide an adequate buffer for the project.

PLANNING BOARD ACTION:

MOTION: Recognizing no regional implications that could occur from Blue Wave Solar's Special Permit application for a Solar Farm along County Highway 116A and to offer no recommendation to the Town of Johnstown Planning Board.

MADE BY: Jerry Moore

SECONDED: Fred Bochenek

VOTE: Unanimous

C. Town of Johnstown Planning Board – Special Permit for Solar Array along Indian Road

Bluewave Solar would like to construct a 3.62 megawatt Solar Farm along Indian Road in the Town of Johnstown (Tax Map Parcel No. 172.-2-47). The existing property is approximately 72+/- acres in size. The physical disturbance on the project site is estimated to be approximately 22+/- acres.

PLANNING BOARD DISCUSSION: Mr. Geraghty again pointed out that this proposed solar array has one (1) location along County Highway 116 where it will be visible. He indicated that the applicants are proposing some minor plantings in order to provide a visual buffer for the project.

Planning Board Vice Chairman James Anderson questioned the tax revenues that the Town of Johnstown is seeing from all of the Solar Farm operations in that community?

Mr. Geraghty explained that NYSEDA now dictates the formula that local assessors have to use when assessing Solar Farm operations. Nevertheless, he pointed out that the Town of Johnstown does receive some notable tax revenues from all of the Solar Farm operations in that community.

Planning Board Member Jerry Moore stated that, once again, he would like the County Planning Board to at least offer recommendations regarding plant species that can be used for screening purposes.

PLANNING BOARD ACTION:

MOTION: Recognizing no regional implications that could occur from Blue Wave Solar's Special Permit application for a Solar Farm along Indian Road and to offer no recommendation to the Town of Johnstown Planning Board concerning this Special Permit application.

MADE BY: James Anderson

SECONDED: John Kessler

VOTE: Unanimous

4. **2021 Fulton County Planning Board Annual Report:**

In accordance with Section 239-c of the General Municipal Law of New York State, the County Planning Board shall file an Annual Report with the County Board of Supervisors. A copy of the draft 2021 Annual Report was forwarded to County Planning Board members with their Agenda packets.

PLANNING BOARD DISCUSSION: Planning Board members had no comments regarding the 2021 Annual Report. Senior Planner Aaron Enfield pointed out that the Planning Board met fewer times in 2021, which resulted in a smaller Annual Report.

PLANNING BOARD ACTION:

MOTION: Authorizing the submittal of the 2021 Fulton County Planning Board Annual Report to the Fulton County Board of Supervisors.

MADE BY: James Anderson

SECONDED: Dave Rackmyre

VOTE: Unanimous

5. **Fulton County Brownfield Program**

The Fulton County Center for Regional Growth (FCCRG) has been awarded a \$300,000 Brownfield Assessment Grant from the EDA to provide Phase 1 and 2 Site Assessments on properties. The CRG has partnered with HRP Associates to perform the Assessment. The Fulton County Planning Board has been asked to think of any sites that they may feel as though have redevelopment potential and may have contamination on them. These sites would be added to an overall list that is being developed throughout the County.

1. The site can either be privately or publicly owned.
2. The site is assumed to have contamination.
3. The site has or should have public support for redevelopment.
4. Redevelopment can be for typical economic development reasons or for public recreation, parking, etc. (does not have to be specific to commercial)

Assessment Grants provide funding for developing inventories of brownfield sites, prioritizing sites, conducting community involvement activities, conducting planning, conducting site assessments, developing site-specific cleanup plans, and developing reuse plans related to brownfield sites. A portion of the Assessment Grant funding must be used to conduct site assessments. Assessment Grant funds may not be used to conduct cleanup activities.

Successful brownfields reuse and redevelopment often depends on early consideration of the range of potential future uses for each brownfield site. Local community priorities, market conditions, infrastructure availability, environmental contamination, public health issues, and local ordinances shape brownfield site reuse opportunities. Having a site reuse plan grounded in these local conditions will directly influence how that site is characterized, assessed, and cleaned up

PLANNING BOARD DISCUSSION: Mr. Enfield explained that the FCCRG recently was awarded \$300,000 to assess potential Brownfield sites throughout the County. He asked Planning Board members if any sites came to mind that can be placed on a list for Fulton County to consider?

Planning Board Member Jerry Moore indicated that the Korkay site in Broadalbin is one possibility. He explained that the Presbyterian Church, which is situated next door to the former Korkay site, has been interested in the property for several years.

Mr. Anderson suggested that the Fashion Tanning site along Hales Mills Road in the Town of Johnstown be put on the list.

Mr. Goderie agreed and pointed out that, at one time, there were lagoons in the back of that property. Mr. Goderie then suggested that some of the old landfill sites, such as the Town of Perth Landfill, which is adjacent to his farm property, could be looked at.

Planning Board Member John Kessler suggested that the manufacturing site on Mill Street in the Village of Broadalbin could be added to the list.

Planning Board Chairman, Dave Rackmyre mentioned 7633 State Highway 29 in the Town of Oppenheim.

Mr. Enfield suggested that Board members call or send e-mails to the Planning Department if any other sites come to mind, so that the properties can be mapped.

Mr. Geraghty stated that the Planning Department will compile a list for the Planning Board to consider at its next meeting in March.

6. Planning Board Membership:

The Fulton County Planning Board is a 9-member board with one (1) Alternate member. The Board has been operating for several months with only eight (8) members. On January 26, 2022, Colleen Ioele-DeCristofaro, who lives in the City of Johnstown, expressed an interest in serving on the County Planning Board.

PLANNING BOARD ACTION:

MOTION: Recommending that Colleen Ioele-DeCristofaro's name be sent to the Public Works Committee for consideration as a new County Planning Board member.

MADE BY: James Anderson

SECONDED: Jerry Moore

VOTE: Unanimous

7. Activities Report November 2021 – January 2022:

Each month, County Planning Department staff put together an Activities Report for the Buildings and Grounds/Highway Committee of the Fulton County Board of Supervisors. This Committee is responsible for overseeing the work undertaken by the Planning Department staff. In an effort to give County Planning Board members an idea of the types of issues that are being examined and the types of projects that are currently being worked on by Planning Department staff, the Activities Report is included on the Board's monthly Agenda.

PLANNING BOARD DISCUSSION: There were no Planning Board comments regarding the Activities Report.

8. Other Business:

PLANNING BOARD DISCUSSION: Mr. Anderson asked when the County Planning Board will receive another update on Airport projects? He noted that there is quite a bit of helicopter activity at the County Airport.

Mr. Geraghty indicated that LifeNet is up and running at the Airport. He indicated that he would probably have Chris Stankes come in and do an annual Airport update in April or May of this year.

9. Close of Meeting:

MOTION: To close the meeting at 9:12 a.m.

MADE BY: James Anderson

SECONDED: Fred Bochenek

VOTE: Unanimous