

The Regular Meeting of the Town of Owego Planning Board was held at 7:00 PM on Tuesday, February 22, 2022 at the Owego Town Hall, 2354 State Route 434 Apalachin, New York.

Present: Chairman Rieg, Lisa Baileys, Craig Wademan, James Tofte, David Marsh and Lynne Esquivel

Absent: Leah Hammond

Others Present: Planning & Zoning Administrator Joann Lindstrom, Town Attorney Irene Graven

Chairman Rieg called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM. Chairman Rieg made a motion to approve the minutes from the October 26, 2021 meeting as written. Lynne Esquivel seconded the motion, and the motion was carried unanimously.

Chairman Rieg introduced Appeal No. 2106, a request for a Special Use Permit to construct a Solar Farm on State Route 434, submitted by Farmer Brown Solar, LLC. Tim Gourley, project manager for Tract Engineering, and Jason Kline, of CSG developers were present.

Chairman Rieg noted a letter from the Apalachin Fire Department Chief, Mike George, stating the proposed project meets his approval and no concerns were noted. Chairman Rieg also noted a letter from NYSDOT, with the conditions listed, as well as a letter from the Tioga County Planning Board, recommending approval, but with noted conditions.

Chairman Rieg then asked Tim Gourley to give a brief overview of the project. Mr. Gourley stated Farmer Brown Solar, LLC is proposing a 4.95 MW Solar Farm on State Route 434. The project would cover 18 acres with a 7-foot high chain link perimeter fence, with a gate and Knox Box. They do not intend to cut down any forest area/tree lines. Access to the project will be from State Route 434.

Chairman Rieg questioned how far back from the roadway the panels would start. Mr. Gourley explained far enough so the current driving range that is there will be still be useable, and a tall netting will be installed to prevent possible damage to the panels.

Mr. Marsh asked what the height of the solar panels would be. Mr. Gourley stated 10 feet.

Chairman Rieg asked if there would be any lighting onsite. Mr. Kline stated no.

Mrs. Baileys asked if there would be any glare or sound when the solar panels move. Mr. Gourley stated there would be no glare. He stated the only sound you would hear would be a low hum from the transformer. Mr. Gourley stated based on studies, this low hum sound would mimic background noise from State Route 434.

Mr. Wademan questioned why there were two (2) driveways for the project. Mr. Gourley stated one was to access the project, and the other was at the request of the land owner, to be able to access the remaining land.

Mr. Tofte asked what their plan was to maintain the project. Mr. Gourley stated lawn care will be contracted out. Mr. Kline stated they are discussing this with Global.

Ms. Esquivel questioned how the snow would be removed from the solar panels. Mr. Kline stated that because the panels will have a 60-degree tilt, the snow would be able to be dumped off.

Mr. Wademan stated the storage for the battery pack that is proposed for the project should not be a shipping container as stated. He would like to see something more aesthetically pleasing to the area. Mr. Wademan questioned if there was a decommissioning plan in place. Mr. Gourley stated there is one in place, however, not needed until project has been approved and the pilot has been negotiated.

Mr. Tofte questioned if the decommissioning included disposal of the panels. Mr. Gourley stated yes, they property will essentially be left in the condition it was found.

Chairman Rieg questioned a start date. Mr. Kline stated it would be a fall 2022 build, if all appropriate approvals are completed. Chairman Rieg questioned the length of time it would take to complete. Mr. Kline stated 4 months. Chairman Rieg asked how long the lease on the property was for. Mr. Kline stated 35 years. Chairman Rieg questioned the day to day operations, and if there would be anyone on site. Mr. Gourley stated everything is done remotely, and crew will stop by one to two times a month for maintenance.

Ms. Esquivel questioned the benefits of the solar farm, and who would benefit. Mr. Kline stated the electricity will go back into the grid and NYSEDA gets the credits.

Mr. Tofte asked if there is a mechanism that would force a shut down if someone were to be working on the power line. Mr. Kline stated that NYSEG is taking care of all of that. Mr. Tofte stated that his concern is the battery storage box as there was not much information provided by the applicant. Mr. Gourley stated the battery box is still in discussions and working on specifics, but will provide to the Zoning Board of Appeals once they know. Mr. Tofte asked if any postings would be on the perimeter fence. Mr. Gourley stated a no trespassing sign would be placed every 250 feet.

Mr. Tofte made a motion to recommend approval to the Zoning Board of Appeals with two contingencies:

- (1) the applicant must address screening at the battery site;
- (2) the traffic circulation at the battery site be clarified

Ms. Esquivel seconded the motion and it carried unanimously.

Chairman Rieg then introduced Planning Board Special Permit #1-2022, a request to construct a telecommunications tower at 1801 State Route 17C, submitted by Centerline Communications, LLC. Brenda Blask-Lewis of Centerline Communications, LLC, and Matthew Siock, of Lockheed Martin were present.

Chairman Rieg noted the Zoning Board of Appeals had granted the Area Variance for the project, due to the close proximity to Lockheed Martin's helipad.

Chairman Rieg asked for a brief description of the project. Ms. Blask-Lewis stated Centerline Communications, LLC on behalf of AT&T is requesting to construct a 100 foot monopole on Lockheed Martin's property to improve coverage at the Lockheed Martin facility, and surrounding areas. Ms. Blask-Lewis stated access for the tower would be from an existing driveway on Day Hollow Road, and during construction, vehicles would enter through the main entrance, Lakeview Drive, to Lockheed Martin. Chairman Rieg asked how much traffic this tower is expected to generate once operational. Ms. Blask-Lewis stated once a month for maintenance.

Mr. Tofte asked if there would be lighting for the monopole. Mr. Siock stated at the request of Lockheed Martin, Centerline Communications, LLC has agreed to have solid light during the day and a red light in the evening hours. Mr. Tofte asked if the monopole would only improve AT&T coverage. Ms. Blask-Lewis stated essentially it would, however other carriers will benefit. Mr. Tofte noted that there is security 24 hours a day 7 days a week at Lockheed Martin, therefore does not see this as an issue. Mr. Tofte asked what structure the tower will be placed on. Ms. Blask-Lewis explained it is a steel walk-in cabinet. Mr. Tofte asked how the tower would get electricity. Ms. Blask-Lewis explained electricity would be from Day Hollow Road and be underground. Mr. Tofte asked how many amps service. Ms. Blask-Lewis explained it is a 400 amp service.

Ms. Esquivel questioned the use of the propane tank on the proposed project. Mr. Siock explained it would be used for a back-up generator.

Chairman Rieg then opened the meeting to the public. No one was present to comment and no comments were received. The public hearing was closed.

Mr. Tofte completed the SEQR form with Chairman Rieg, noting that the only incomplete section was the archeological/historical sensitivity, as the applicant was still waiting for a no effect letter from SHPO.

Ms. Esquivel made a motion to approve Planning Board Special Use Permit #1-2022 including issuing a negative declaration under SEQR contingent on the no effect letter from SHPO. Mr. Wademan seconded the motion and it carried unanimously.

The next regular scheduled meeting is Thursday, March 22, 2022 at 7:00 PM.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully Submitted,

Teddi Card  
Secretary, Planning Board