

Union Planning Board Minutes
Thursday, December 8, 2022, 6:30 p.m.
William L. Pullen Municipal Building Downstairs Meeting Room

Present: Gerald S. Brooks, Jr. (“Jerry,” Chair), Dale Flint, Jesse Thompson, John Mountainland, Glenn Taylor

Others Present: CEO Grant Watmough, Wayne Kirkpatrick, Alex Roberts-Pierel of Revision Energy, Wallace

- 1. Meeting called to order:** 6:30 p.m. by Jerry Brooks.

- 2. Public Hearing – Solar Array for Bangor Savings Bank by Revision Energy, Map 27 Lot 11:**

Open Public Hearing (Article 2 Site Plan Review and Article 5 Solar Arrays) at 6:33 p.m.
by: Jerry Brooks

Alex Roberts-Pierel said the project plan was essentially unchanged since fall. He recapped the project including that it’s owned by Bangor Savings Bank and part of the bank’s sustainability initiative. Just shy of 10,000 SF will be arrays, impervious coverage will be limited to posts, and everything else will remain grassland. There will be no tree cutting. Any grass cut will be revegetated prior to operation, so it will appear as just a field.

Referring to the map, he said there will be five rows in each array. The top of the racking will be 10 to 12’ from grade and all fixed, no motor or mechanical. He further discussed inverters, combiners, and the fixed modules of tempered glass over silicone with aluminum frames. Construction will likely follow winter and take approximately 10 months with a crew of two to 20 people. Operation and maintenance will not add traffic to the area. The majority of the maintenance will be online. Actual onsite traffic may be one to two general maintenance visits per year. The components are largely warranted for about 25 years but expected to last more like 30 to 40 years with general upkeep.

He added re: decommissioning, the project is not large enough to constitute DEP involvement. As owner it is Bangor Savings Bank’s responsibility.

Jerry confirmed trenches will be probably 3’ underground with no additional road back to the field. Existing access to bank and parking is sufficient. Construction will be quite brief and no trucking. If needed they will bring in green mats to minimize ground impact.

December 8, 2022 Planning Board Minutes

Valerie Wallace, 61 Sennebec Road, spoke of her concerns including animals that appear every night will not come out with all that stuff, and the array will depreciate the value of her house. She has lived there for 34 years and always paid taxes. She asked the board if they realized how beautiful Union is, and if they've been to Augusta and seen how ugly that array is. She added the bank has enough money to go buy land elsewhere.

Jerry said this is more like a solar garden, quite small. Valerie said you would not want to sit on your deck in summer and look at that; it will ruin the view and just be awful.

Jerry noted this is already an approved use under the Solar Array Ordinance. Valerie said they're going to do it no matter what she says. Grant said it's what the ordinance says.

Alex said he can't speak to BSB preference or land acquisition strategy: they own the land, near power. He will be happy to reach out to them, and they want to remain good neighbors. He asked Valerie to provide her contact info. She said she talked to 20 people against it. Glenn said they should be here.

Further discussion included depreciation, which Grant said is not a factor the board can take into consideration. Alex said he's not involved but knows it was a concern in Augusta, and findings showed no direct correlation with a drop in values. Jerry added re: the large array, a Con Edison survey showed no significant depreciation though not our purview. Grant summarized see what the ordinance says; if it meets the criteria then it'll be an allowed use there.

Alex explained the panels themselves are not actually highly reflective and won't be angled toward Valerie's residence. He thinks they will be about 150' from her property line immediately to the north. Modules will be tilted approximately 30 degrees. The panels will be a dark matte blue, with reflected glare less than water, and do a good job of not giving shimmery reflective light.

Glenn noted somebody could come in and build a Walmart as this is a commercial zone. Jerry said the board has definitely heard Valerie's concerns. Alex said one of the pre-application talking points was BSB not wanting the array right on the road, not too imposing on the view, less than 20% of the field.

In answer to Jerry, Alex described the fencing as agricultural opposed to chain link style, more what you'd see in farmland, more post-style wide gate wiring maybe with open squares that go to the bottom. It will not allow large animals to pass through as part of the electrical code, but smaller ones like bunnies and foxes can pass thru.

December 8, 2022 Planning Board Minutes

Once in operation it will go back to generally being a field and shouldn't have other negative impacts.

Valerie thanked the board. Jerry thanked her for participating.

Alex clarified it will be a gated fence, usually with a Knox box so the fire department can have access, which Jesse said was a good idea.

Grant mentioned CMP's recent major power failure in that area. Alex said the project will be built with a disconnect so for example a breaker is switched to isolate the project from the grid and vice versa. There's an automatic system. Alex said there will be a certain degree of shutdown in a certain time to protect line workers.

Close Public Hearing at 7:02 p.m. by: Jerry Brooks

3. Final – Solar Array for Bangor Savings Bank – Revision Energy – Map 27 Lot 11:

Jerry established a quorum, jurisdiction, standing to apply, all fees and applications submitted.

Jerry noted the list of waivers on sheet provided by Revision Energy.

The board went through Article 5 Solar Arrays, 2.5 Review Criteria and Performance Standards, and appendices.

The decommissioning plan was discussed. Glenn didn't see the need for structural evaluation every five years.

Alex said they assumed the cost estimate was separate from the structural engineering evaluation, adding the cost estimate happens every five years which keeps the bonding or revocable letter of credit so the town would never be without funds.

John said the town's concern is if it becomes an eyesore, do we have the funds to get rid of it. He doesn't think we need a structural engineer evaluation every five years.

Dale mentioned chemicals in those panels 20 years down the road that might cost a lot to take care of in the future.

More discussion on decommissioning ensued.

December 8, 2022 Planning Board Minutes

Grant noted if the solar panels become inactive/not functioning for up to a year, then decommissioning has to kick in. Worst case they stop functioning because of a failure, and if they don't fix it, it has to be decommissioned.

Motion to approve the project as presented, waiving the portion of Article 5 Section 6 which states "structural evaluation prepared by a professional civil engineer" while the rest stands including "removal cost estimate" by: Glenn Taylor

2nd by: Dale Flint

5-0

4. Accept minutes of September 8, 2022:

Tabled due to lack of quorum.

Accept minutes of October 13, 2022:

Motion by: Glenn Taylor

2nd by: Jesse Thompson

4-0-1 abstention (Mountainland)

5. Any other business by the board: None.

6. Adjourn:

Motion by: Jerry Brooks

2nd by: Glenn Taylor

5-0

Meeting adjourned at 7:49 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Sherry Abaldo
Secretary