

Palmer Planning Board

Planning Board Meeting Minutes

Monday, January 22, 2018

I. Call To Order

Chairman Michael Marciniac called the meeting to order at 7:00PM on Monday, January 22, 2018 in the Palmer Police Station Conference Room. Present were members Norman Czech, Kathleen Burns, Thomas Skowyra and Paul Burns-Johnson. Also present was Town Planner, Linda Leduc, recording minutes.

II. Public Hearings

7:00PM - Borrego Solar Systems, Inc. - 271 Breckenridge Street, Palmer

Site Plan Approval to install a 6.4 MW ground-mounted photovoltaic system at 271 Breckenridge Street, Palmer. Parcel also known as. Assessors Map 19, Lots 60-63.

Chairman Marciniac opened the public hearing at 7:00PM. Town Planner, L. Leduc, read the public hearing notice.

The applicant Steve Long, P.E. of Borrego Solar Systems, Inc. was present to introduce the project.

John Furman of vhb was present representing the Planning Board.

S. Long described the site as a 62.727-acre tract of land comprised of 4 separate parcels. The parcels were consolidated on 12/18/17 when the Planning Board endorsed the SANR Plan. The site currently is wooded and contains a vacant single-family home. The land is owned by Curly Green, LLC who has provided an owner's statement granting the right to Borrego Solar to act on their behalf with respect to this application.

S. Long explained that the proposed solar energy generating facility would cover approximately 28.7 acres and produce up to 6.4 MW DC of electricity. A 14' wide gravel access road would be constructed from Breckenridge Road to the facility. The road would be approximately 350' long and be constructed with 8" of clean washed stone. Turnarounds would be built to allow for the safe entry and egress of vehicles. The system would be unmanned, with maintenance vehicles accessing the site 3-4 times per year. A security perimeter fence will surround all electrical equipment and solar arrays within the 28.7 acre facility. The fenced area will have a main 18' wide vehicle gate and four 4' wide man-gates.

The approximately 16,000 solar panels will be mounted on a system of racking with screw type foundations. There will be seventy-five SunGrow inverters, four transformers and one switchgear. Energy storage will be incorporated into the solar facility design to offset electric loads. The battery enclosure will be 8'x8'x40' and will store approximately 2 hours of electricity. They will be located

adjacent to the western electrical equipment pads and will be enclosed in a shipping container. The system within the fenced area will be connected by underground wires. Overhead power lines will interconnect the system to a point on River Street. The above-ground equipment will consist of fourteen poles with twelve utility poles (six on either side) located approximately 300' up the access road.

S. Long stated that there are some jurisdictional areas under the Wetland Protection Act. They will be attending a Conservation meeting the following night.

A 10.9-acre area outside the fenced array will be cleared of trees to manage potential shading. This area will not be stumped and will be left untouched for the life of the project. No clearing will take place within the 100' property line setbacks other than what is required for the access driveway and utility clearance.

Lighting: One 9-foot tall motion-activated light is proposed at each electrical equipment area. The light will be directed downward and away from residences.

Signage: A warning sign will be posted on the security fence. No other signs are proposed aside from those required by the National Electric Code.

J. Furman went over his Site Plan and Stormwater Review memo dated January 18, 2018.

Mr. Furman directed the Planning Board to c. 171-29.C.(1)(e) which requires the Board, when reviewing Site Plan applications, to consider whether the proposed project is found to be in harmony with the surrounding neighborhood, and that the existing trees are preserved to the maximum extent possible.

A Landscaping Plan was not submitted with the application and a waiver was not requested.

Traffic volumes were provided stating there would be 40 employee trips per day. J. Furman asked that there be a parking area shown on the Plan as well as a narrative provided regarding the location of parking for the daily workers.

J. Furman discussed the fact that there is an existing house on the property. The house is noted to be abandoned. He asked if there were plans to demolish the structure and stated that there cannot be two primary uses on one lot. S. Long stated that the plans do include demolishing and removing the house. J. Furman asked that a note be provided on plan stating this.

J. Furman stated that there are a number of additional items that need to be submitted for the plan set to be complete. He listed the following:

- Provide a property plan that is signed and sealed by a registered Land Surveyor
- Provide a Plan Set signed and sealed by a Massachusetts Professional Engineer
- Revise the owner information on the cover sheet
- Confirm what topography datum was utilized
- Add all abutters to the Existing Conditions Plan

- Incorporate a statement on plan to comply with all other required local and state permits

J. Furman asked about the cutting of vegetation outside the fenced area enclosing the array. S. Long stated that this 10.9-acre area around the array will be cut but not stumped or grubbed. M. Marciniac asked if this area was included in the required 50% open space calculation and if so, cutting is not allowed in the open space area. Per Section 171.126, 3.5 this area is to remain untouched and in its current natural state. S. Long stated that it was included as part of the open space requirement and that he interpreted that section of the Ordinance to allow such activity. He continued that once this area was cut, the vegetation would not continue to be managed in any way and it would remain untouched for the life of the project. He also stated that this project meets the 100' vegetated buffer requirement as it is fully intact and there is no selective cutting proposed within that area.

M. Marciniac asked if the abandoned house and new utility poles were located in the required open space. He also asked if the 100' vegetated buffer was intact along the access road. He expressed concern over the pole location and whether any of the 14 proposed utility poles will be visible to the neighbors. J. Furman stated that he did not believe the open space requirements per section 171-126, 3.7 have been met. He asked that more detail and an updated calculation, excluding wetland resource areas, be provided.

J. Furman stated that the project proposes removal of 870 cu. yds. Per section 171-126, 3.6 the site must remain balanced. The earthworks calculations need to be revised so that no earth is removed from the site.

J. Furman stated that in his research of the deed he found references to the rights of easement to American Telephone and Telegraph. He requested that the easement be shown on the survey plan and that a narrative be submitted regarding the impact of the easement, if it is still in force.

An estimate for the decommissioning of the project was submitted. L. Leduc asked if the value considered the costs to remove the proposed battery storage compartments and whether these batteries would be considered a hazardous material. This is the first solar project where battery storage has been proposed. S. Long stated that he would consult with other Borrego staff members who are expert on the topic so this can be fully addressed at the next meeting.

J. Furman stated that more discussion needs to occur to determine the appropriate amount and form of the Decommissioning Surety

L. Leduc stated that Proof of Recording of the Lot Consolidation Plan still needs to be provided.

STORMWATER:

J. Furman discussed the project's Stormwater application. He stated that no waivers were requested as part of the application.

WAIVERS: After review of the project J. Furman stated that a separate erosion and sediment control plan was not provided in the application. Vhb would recommend granting this waiver if a request is submitted.

Stormwater inspection dates as required under section 145-5 were not submitted. Vhb supports that these dates be provided as a condition of approval for the project. J. Furman stated that it is vhb's opinion that this project would warrant waiving the requirement for televising the underground conveyance piping as required as part of the final stormwater inspection. A waiver of this requirement should be requested.

The estimated seasonal high groundwater elevation was not provided as no soil tests were performed for the project. A waiver of soil testing/infiltration testing should be requested.

The existing conditions hydrologic (Hydro-CAD) model needs to be submitted.

J. Furman commented that the submitted plan set is stamped "Not for Construction". He reminded the applicant that the only plans used for construction are those approved by the Planning Board. The creation or amendment of any subsequent drawings would need to be approved by the Board.

J. Furman stated that no stormwater maintenance structures have been proposed for the project. While vhb agrees with the methodology used for the stormwater models, specifically that a change in cover type from "woods" to "meadow" reduces the peak rate of runoff, the design needs to incorporate additional erosion and sediment control measures, particularly during construction. He recommends, at a minimum, stone check dams and temporary settling basins need to be included in the design to ensure the site is stable at all stages of development.

J. Furman stated that localized areas within the overall site are being regraded to smooth the surface. After grading, these areas are proposed to be stabilized with loam and seed. Given the existence of steep slopes in some of these areas, vhb recommends that the Board require additional stabilization measures, including a silt fence to divert surface water around the regraded areas until stable. The use of erosion control matting or hydroseeding with a tacking agent are also being recommended after topsoil is spread.

S. Long stated that the existing directional flow of the site is towards the Mass Pike and regrading of the site will not change that but he will look at implementing vhb's recommendations.

J. Furman noted that the following items have not yet been submitted but may be considered as part of the projects conditions of approval:

- A Stormwater Operations & Maintenance Agreement in a recordable format
- A Stormwater Performance Guarantee.
- EPA NOI permit # due to the project disturbing more than 1 acre of land

Chairman Marciniac asked for questions from the public.

Zach Calkins, 273 Breckenridge Street, expressed concern regarding the abandoned house. It has been abandoned for at least 10 years and is causing blight within the neighborhood. He also stated there were underground springs on his property and was concerned with the possible change in hydrology this project may cause. He asked if the wildlife habitat had been investigated yet.

Justin Gregoire, 263 Breckenridge Street, stated that he was concerned with water contamination particularly if there is a battery spill. There is wet clay 6' below the surface and this could affect his drinking water as well as everyone downstream.

Considering the proximity to the Palmer water districts reservoir, the Board then discussed if this property was in the water supply protection district. The associated map was referenced and it was determined that this parcel is located in the Secondary Recharge Area. As a result, a Special Permit is required for all new commercial uses. If the battery storage is considered a hazardous material that component of the project would not be allowed. S. Long was advised to look into whether the battery storage fell under this designation and submit a Special Permit application under section 171.69 – Water Supply Protection District by Feb 5th, 2017 if it was to be opened and get on the same schedule to run concurrent with this public hearing

Lucy Rohan, 274 Breckenridge Street, asked what the anticipated timeline would be for the project. S. Long stated that the construction would take approximately 8 months. She asked if there were any known health hazards to people living next to a solar array. S. Long stated that he was not aware of any. She asked if there would be any noise issues. S. Long stated that the transformers will make a humming noise during the day when the project is generating power but would not be operating at night.

Scott Rohan, 274 Breckenridge Street, asked about the expected truck traffic and if there was a proposed truck route.

A Motion to continue the public hearing to February 26, 2018 at 7:00PM was made by P. Burns-Johnson, seconded by N. Czech. The motion passed 5:0.

III. Old Business:

Update to Quaker Lane Subdivision:

Owner, Paul Les, was present and represented by his engineer, Don Frydryk, PE of Sherman & Frydryk Engineering.

D. Frydryk submitted new pictures showing that there had been additional grading to and stabilization of the site. He explained that the shoulders on both sides of Quaker Lane had been completed as well as the right hand embankment when coming from the Flynt Street direction. The left hand embankment is not completed yet. The Board was satisfied with the additional progress made and granted an extension to the subdivision completion date. The new completion date is October 6, 2018.

Knox Pond Construction Report # 123:

A motion was made to acknowledge receipt of Knox Pond Construction Report #123 by P. Burns-Johnson, seconded by K. Burns. The motion passed 5:0.

Updated Site Plan, RB Enterprises, River Road Earth Removal

In response to vhb's year-end inspection for 2107 of the earth removal operation at L12 River Road, the Board received an updated 2016-2018 Operating Plan. The plan shows the location and elevation of all monitoring wells on the site.

A motion was made to acknowledge receipt of the updated plan by P. Burns-Johnson, seconded by K. Burns. The motion passed 5:0.

IV. New Business:

Meeting Minutes of January 8, 2018:

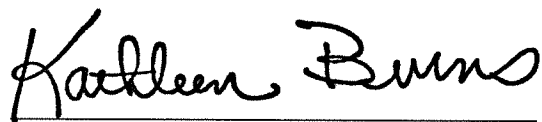
A Motion to approve the meeting minutes of January 8, 2018 as amended was made by P. Burns-Johnson, seconded by K. Burns. The Motion passed (5:0)

Abutting Town Notices and the Monthly Interest Allocation Report were distributed to the Board.

Conflict of Interest paperwork was distributed to the Board.

V. Adjournment:

A motion was made to adjourn at 9:10PM by K. Burns, seconded by P. Burns-Johnson. The motion passed (5:0)

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kathleen Burns". The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned above a horizontal line.

Kathleen Burns, Clerk

