

Minutes
West Rutland Selectboard Meeting
Monday, October 11th, 2021
6:00 pm

Present: John Harvey, Chet Brown, Jayne Pratt, Nick Notte and Dick Daley **Remote:** Keith Whitcomb, Annette Smith, Shona Marston, unknown zoom user.

Others Present: Mary Ann Goulette, Mike Moser, Lori Lyons, Mitch Frankenberg, Larry and Karen Elliott, Nick and Vicky Lasko, Sandy Fink, Bev Peterson, Lisa and Vincent Tripodina, Jennifer Frederick, Lynn Jenne, Venessa Mills, Sheri Grabowski, Pat Clarke, Richard Grabowski, Christie Wright, Pam and Karl Sokol, Lisa Wright, Frank Beaulieu and Steve Bania.

Call to Order: The meeting was called to order at 6:00pm by John with the pledge of allegiance.

Agenda Approval: Motion by Nick seconded by Chet to approve the agenda as written. Motion approved unanimously.

Minutes Approval: Motion made by Chet seconded by Nick to approve the minutes of the meeting of September 13th, 2021. Motion approved.

Public Concerns: Mike Moser wanted to recognize Hunter Skaza of West Rutland and the Quarry Valley Bass Fishing Team as Vermont State Champions.

Discussion Items:

a) **Grandpa's Knob Community Wind Presentation** – Sam Carlson presented the proposed project:

- The project is a single wind turbine to be placed on Grandpa's Knob in Castleton. The turbine tower is shorter than the existing 310' communications tower and would be placed 100' elevation below the existing communication tower. The 3 turbine blades would sweep '143 higher than the hub of the turbine. The project would use existing road and powerlines, minimizing environmental impacts.
- The project is not the 20 wind turbine along a 7 mile stretch of the undeveloped ridgeline that was proposed in 2012.
- Grandpas' Knob Community Wind LLC has been awarded a standard offer contract by the State of Vermont for the purchase at 11.6 cents a kilowatt fixed rate for 20 years. They will now begin assessments of the visual, sound and economic impacts. Based on the feasibility, they anticipate submitting a permit application in 12 months.
- They will submit a monthly fact sheet to all 5 towns as the information is updated. The project website will also be updated with the latest information.
- This is a community wind project, not a commercial wind project, which means they propose to distribute one-half of the net annual operating profits split between the five surrounding towns over the lifetime of the project. More accurate projections will be produced as the project costs and financing become clearer.
- The project offers significant environmental benefits. It will contribute to Vermont's renewable energy objectives, avoiding an estimated 85,000 metric tons of carbon

dioxide emitted into the atmosphere. This is equivalent to avoiding 9.6 million gallons of gasoline.

The audience asked a number of questions beginning with the Selectboard:

Nick Notte read several paragraphs from the Town Plan where industrial wind is prohibited in West Rutland. Therefore, the Town cannot support this plan. Mr. Carlson offered that it is not an industrial wind project because ½ of the profits are going back to the 5 surrounding towns. Also, the turbine will be installed in Castleton and the visual impact in West Rutland will be very minimal. The project will continue based on the results of the impact studies.

Chet Brown stated if you can see the existing communication tower than you will see the turbine since the blades will be taller.

Dick Daley stated based on the estimated \$3 million in revenue, the five towns will split \$100,000 per year or probably less than \$20,000 a year for West Rutland. He also asked the listers that were present in the room if property values would decrease if you had a view of the turbine? The lister said it was possible.

Christy Wright stated that your property value would decline and \$20,000 equates to less than a penny on the tax rate.

Mitch Frankenberg asked for clarification on the definition of an industrial wind project. If the power is going into the grid than it is industrial wind. He also asked about the tax credit, federal subsidies and grants that would be used for this project. Mr. Carlson indicated they would use the federal tax credit which is 22-26% of the estimated \$4.5 million project cost. They will also use accelerated depreciation. These two methods made the project viable.

Lisa Wright indicated that the Regional Planning Commission has sent a letter saying they will support the Towns Plans and oppose this project. She also asked what is the exact location, latitude and longitude, of the proposed tower. Mr. Carlson did not have that answer with him but would forward the information to the Town. It is approximately 1,000 feet from the town's boundary line. She also asked why Ira wasn't on the list of the surrounding towns. Mr. Carlson indicated the tower would not be visible in Ira.

Steve Bania asked will they use existing power lines. Yes, there is 3 phase power now but they would need to string one more line.

A resident asked what direction the wind blows. Northeast. The resident then suggested the sound would travel towards West Rutland. Mr. Carlson said the feasibility study will hire an independent environmental firm to study the sound impacts.

Another resident asked where the turbine was manufactured. The answer was China. It was suggested to use an American made company like GE here in Rutland, and also save on fossil fuels in transportation.

Mr. Moser asked when the town did the town-wide referendum? Approximately 2105.

Ms. Elliott asked at a price of \$4.5 million how long will it take to recoup its costs. Why are you spending all this money for one turbine? Mr. Carlson said it was symbolic based on the history of the first turbine. It will also reduce carbon emissions.

The question was asked if there will be any blasting to install the foundation. Mr. Carlson said they have not hired the geotechnical engineer yet to determine that.

It was also suggested if they want to honor Mr. Putnam as the first installer of a wind turbine then they should take their proceeds and set up a scholarship in Mr. Putnam's name.

Ms. Jenne asked if the existing road would need to be modified for truck traffic. Yes, some areas would need some reinforcement and additional gravel. This turbine is not as big as the Georgia Mountain project. Ms. Jenne also asked if there would be a beacon installed for airplanes. Yes, a beacon would be installed similar to the existing communications tower.

Ms. Wright asked if the project needed to be shovel ready in order to get the standard contract award. No only to get the permit.

It was stated another town spent \$100,000 to stop a wind tower from coming into their town.

Pam Sokol asked about the wildlife, the bats and other environmental impact. The feasibility study should address the questions. They will share the information as it becomes available.

What is to stop other projects from coming in to install additional turbines on that ridgeline? Mr. Carlson indicated Grandpa's Knob Community Wind would not be seeking any additional towers. They have site control for 15 miles but they could prevent anyone else coming in and setting up more.

Mr. Harvey thanked everyone for attending.

b) Housing Needs Assessment – Mary Ann shared a report prepared for the Rutland Housing Trust by John Ryan of Development Cycles. The report shows the need for housing is growing for rental units in all capacities. They suggest focus on improving existing rental stock and expanding the scale and scope of professional units. West Rutland's close proximity to Rutland City indicated good quality housing could also draw from the City.

c) Town Manager Report – Mary Ann indicated we have received approximately \$17K in ARPA funds for past due utility bills. Road work continues on Dewey Avenue. The pavers are due this week to pave: Ross Street, upper Thrall and upper Pleasant Street. Some reclaiming will also occur on Ross and Boardman Hill. We are beginning to work on budgets.

Action Items:

a) Adopt Bylaw Modernization Resolution – Motion made by Nick seconded by Chet to adopt the Bylaw Modernization resolution. Motion approved. This grant will address our current zoning bylaws and address outdated restraints to projects such as large

setbacks and density requirements. It will help to develop and encourage a pedestrian friendly village center.

Board Member Concerns:

Chet – Who purchased the bank? Unknown at this time. There is a hedge on Fairview that needs to be trimmed back so motorists can see pedestrians and oncoming traffic. Was the sale of the town truck to a private owner? Yes, and the funds went back to the truck savings account.

Dick- speeding and parking are an issue on Pleasant Street especially where the road is narrow. Jayne – red truck speeding on Old Town Farm. Also black truck. Need more patrolling from 3-11pm. Mary Ann will bring the sheriffs report to the next meeting which shows the hours and areas of patrol.

John – need some patching on the sidewalk on Ross Street.

Executive Session: Motion made by Nick seconded by Chet to enter executive session at 7:06pm for personnel and real estate. Motion to exit executive session at 7:17pm by Nick seconded by Dick. No action taken.

Adjournment: Nick made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 7:17pm and Chet seconded. Motion approved.

Respectfully submitted

Mary Ann Goulette