

**MINUTES OF THE TOWN OF FORT EDWARD PLANNING BOARD SPECIAL MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY, MAY 13, 2020 HELD VIA ZOOM AT 6:00 P.M.**

Chairman Belden called the meeting to order at 6:00pm

**PRESENT:** Chairman Belden  
Max Fruchter  
Frank Wells  
Joe McMurray  
Valerie Ingersoll  
Zack Middleton  
Don Sanders, Jr.

**OTHERS PRESENT:** Alexander Farkes, Michael Borkowski, Town Engineer Jim Houston, Lauren Sherman (C.T. Male), Dave Cutler, Jeanie Mullen, Sandy Buxton, Lena Botshteyn, Katie DeGroot, Lester Losaw, Peter Ives and Town Clerk Aimee Mahoney

**BUSINESS:**

**Community Power Group, LLC  
Alexander Farkes  
Michael Borkowski**

**Alexander Farkes:** I am the COO for Community Power Group; I have done a little more than a dozen solar projects in New York to date with my partner Mike Borkowski.

**Michael Borkowski:** I started this company about 10 years ago and we have developed solar plants in a variety of states across the country. I am from New York, went to school in upstate New York so we have a pretty good presence in the state and we are looking forward to working with you on this project.

**Alexander Farkes:** With some of the laws that Governor Cuomo has passed Renewable Energy is a big focus of his as well as his administration. Over the past several years there is an incredible amount of solar that has been built. We are talking about a 5 Megawatt Solar Project; to date in the State there has been over 2.2 Gigawatt's worth of solar. In Washington County over 25 Megawatts have already been built and over 660 projects. There are a lot of project benefits such as creation of local jobs and local residents and residential energy users in the National Grid territory have the ability to subscribe to them. There is local tax revenue associated with these projects as well as clean, renewable local power from solar. All of our projects are pollinator friendly habitats. What Community Power is essentially doing is we have a small solar facility that is interconnected onto National Grid's territory and the electricity that goes onto the grid when the project is built, people can sign up. Anyone that has a National Grid bill has the ability to sign up to the project and get 10%-15% off of their electricity. This 5 Megawatt project that we are developing can house 500-600 residents and we want to have as locally a based project as possible. We like to give locals the first opportunity to sign up for the project. For people that can't put solar on their roof or don't want to, this is a remote project that is larger than

they can get the same benefit from. This project is across 2 different parcels, one is in the Town and one is in the Village. The local zone is Residential and there are a lot of taxing entities that would be allocated to this project, Hudson Falls and Fort Edward School Districts as well as the Town and the Village will be receiving tax revenue from this project.

**Michael Borkowski:** The way Community Solar works and the reason the State set it up as it did is because in many instances putting solar on a residential roof doesn't make economic sense because there is not a lot of economies to scale, someone's roof may be shaded or may be too old and not appropriate. They in turn are allowing a certain amount of solar to sit out in a field where real efficiencies will be associated as far as construction costs, maintenance and other types of things and then that facility that sits in the field has an electric meter like the one we have on the side of our house except the solar meter spins backward and instead of getting a bill every month that says we owe so much money, we get a bill every month that says we have credits. What subscribers do is subscribe for a certain number of those credits and because it was put in some remote field somewhere we are able to do that such that we can sell those credits at a discount. A subscriber may subscribe to the solar facility and say their electric bill is \$300.00/month, they can say I want \$300.00 worth of credits a month, then on their bill as a subscriber in the future they will have their regular bill that comes to \$300.00 with a new line item that says Community Solar Net Meter Credit and it will reduce your bill from \$300.00 and it will show the -\$300.00 down to zero. Within the subscriber agreement you will have agreed to a discount that you will pay for those net meter credits and will get a reduction in your bill so you pay \$270.00 for those net meter credits. That is the way it works.

**Alexander Farkes:** The project is located on the Williams Farm property off of Steven's Lane. We have A, B & C. A & B are in the Town and C is in the Village. A is where the solar farm is going to go, B is going to be used for future development and held for something else and then we will work with the Village on C and do some of the solar in the Village. The field at the bottom of May St. is the one we are talking about developing. We have about a 200' setback from the only residents that are there, they kind of use those fields already as their own a little bit and this will in a way protect those fields for them to use the way they want to use them. There are no moving pieces, they are just solar panels; they sit there. Construction is going to be 3-4 months and during that time there will be 10-15 construction people there. After that there is not going to be anybody there, there will not be any noise or pollutants and we will be putting in pollinator friendly grass covering. It's going to sit there and the Town will get more tax revenue and the people will get discounted power. In essence that is the project. The way we understand the Code is according to 108-49-4-E, ground mounted free standing solar collectors mounted on a pole are permitted as a primary structure in all zoning districts of the Town of Fort Edward subject to the following conditions: Site Plan Review, SWPPP, stamped Site Plans, Decommissioning Plans, Financial Plans, Landscaping Plans, etc. and as long as we meet that criteria it is a permitted use.

**Chairman Belden:** The one thing we have agreed on in the Town is that we will not deduct service roads or transformers from your coverage so the percent coverage in our Code is for panels.

**Alexander Farkes:** We should be well under the 40% ratio.

**Chairman Belden:** When do you think you will have an application to us?

**Alexander Farkes:** We are working on it right now, we have our interconnection application already filed, and we are working through our designs. We just wanted to get assimilated with your Code and make sure we are thinking about things the right way. There is some potential for some run off from the old GE spillage that sits in a pond in a remote corner of the property so we are doing some Phase I Environmental due diligence to make sure we understand what the implications of that are. It doesn't impact our site at all.

**Chairman Belden:** Where is your road frontage to access the site?

**Alexander Farkes:** We were just going to continue May St. right down. There will not be anyone going there so it will just be a gravel road that we will make sure is compliant for fire trucks, etc. We are going to keep as much of a natural setting for the neighbors as we can.

**Chairman Belden:** Has our Zoning Administrator worked on this at all, have you heard from Matt French?

**Alexander Farkes:** We have gotten some mixed messages from him. When we read the Code it's kind of clear as day that solar is allowed as a primary structure in all districts and I think maybe Matt wasn't entirely sure about that. If that isn't the case then this becomes a whole different path. Is the Board interpreting the Code as we are?

**Chairman Belden:** Yes, we read it the same way you do.

**The 40 Minute Zoom Meeting Time was up**

**Dated:** May 15, 2020

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Aimee Mahoney, Clerk