

**MINUTES OF THE TOWN OF FORT EDWARD PLANNING BOARD MEETING
HELD ON WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 24, 2022 AT TOWN HALL COMMENCING AT
7:00 P.M.**

Acting Chairperson – Valerie Ingersoll

Acting Chair Valerie Ingersoll called the meeting to order at 7:01pm

Pledge of Allegiance

PRESENT: Valerie Ingersoll
Joseph McMurray
Max Fruchter
Dolores Cogan

ABSENT: Zachary Middleton
Donald Sanders, Jr
Mark Belden

OTHERS PRESENT: Evan Callahan, Sage Ezell, Donald Sanders, Jr and Planning Board Clerk Aimee Mahoney

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: The approval of the minutes of the meeting of May 25, 2022 were tabled

BUSINESS:

**CS Energy
Informational Meeting
Somers Solar Project – CS Energy
Presenters: Evan Callahan & Sage Ezell**

Evan Callahan: It's been a busy year for the solar industry with COVID and supply chain issues. We are presenting a 20 MW project just north of Duer Rd. and South of Hunter Rd. CS Energy is one of the leading Engineering, Procurement & Construction companies in the energy industry; we have sold 1.5+ GW of solar to date and have installed or are working to install 300 MWh of energy storage. We are geographically diverse; we are headquartered in New Jersey with offices in New York, Massachusetts and Pennsylvania. We have 18+ years of experience developing and constructing solar projects and CS Energy successfully developed and constructed the first utility-scale solar project to be turned on in New York which is called Branscomb Solar in Easton.

Sage Ezell: The solar industry has faced several hurdles over the past several years many of which are due to COVID 19. The pandemic has caused delays in development because we haven't been able to be on site for construction projects or in front of Town Boards as well as labor shortages and supply chain issues. A solar tariff investigation began in 2022 pausing panel imports and subjecting previously imported panels to a retroactive tariff; the tariff was paused by

the President this summer. The Inflation Reduction Act was recently passed by the Senate and we expect it to be signed into law soon which will provide long term viability for the solar energy industry. We received a permit about a year ago for the Dolan project and because we have had some delays we will be seeking an extension on that approval; I think we are only going to be bumped back by about 6 months but we will be asking for a 1 year extension.

Joseph McMurray: You are a competitor to the company that wants to go just north of where you are going right?

Sage Ezell: There are a lot of projects that are under development and in a sense we are all competing with other developers but also we are excited that any solar is going through and being developed and constructed at all.

Joseph McMurray: Is there anything making these things last more than 20 years?

Sage Ezell: Right now we are seeing panel life around 30 years and that's for panels that are older.

Joseph McMurray: How much acreage?

Sage Ezell: We are looking at total fenced acreage at around 150 acres which is common for a project of this size.

Evan Callahan: Somers is a 20 MW ac farm encompassing about 150 fenced acres of land; it's a single access tracker system so it will track the sun east to west with interconnection at the existing 115 kV National Grid transmission line. It is located by the southern border of Fort Edward north of Duer Rd and the property will be leased from existing landowners.

Joseph McMurray: Do you already have the leases?

Evan Callahan: Yes, we have the lease options. The project will generate enough clean power for 4,000 homes and will also bring tax revenue to the community via PILOT agreements and a host community agreement which we are working through now as well as 100 construction jobs.

Max Fruchter: What is your anticipated revenue stream for the Town?

Evan Callahan: It is difficult to say before we finish the PILOT agreement with the Town but there was a lot of legislation in flux before we could begin negotiations for a PILOT Agreement.

Max Fruchter: What was Dolan?

Sage Ezell: I'm not exactly sure what Dolan was, we are still in negotiations for the PILOT so we wouldn't have the answer on the revenue yet.

Max Fruchter: How far is this site off of Hunter Rd.?

Sage Ezell: Approximately 200' setbacks off of the south of Hunter Rd.

Max Fruchter: Aesthetically that is not a concern of mine.

Sage Ezell: In the slideshow it shows the location that we were initially looking at for developing this project, we were performing some of the environmental studies and some wetlands were identified as well as a few endangered species so developing the project there would have pretty significant environmental impacts which we try to avoid. The site we are looking at now is approximately 2 miles south of the original site. We are interconnecting on the same line and avoiding all of the initial environmental impacts.

Evan Callahan: We have completed our site identification and moved into our interconnection studies. We completed our system impact and feasibility studies and everything looks great and we proceeded into our environmental field studies. Our next step is targeting the SEQR/Site Plan approval and we are looking to submit that application mid to late September.

Max Fruchter: Who is going to be the lead agency on this?

Sage Ezell: We are hoping that you will be the lead agency.

Evan Callahan: We hope to start construction the summer of 2023 which will allow us to operate at the end of 2024 and then we will decommission 20-40 years after that depending on how long the technology lasts.

Joseph McMurray: Are you planning on developing both of these projects at the same time?

Sage Ezell: Yes, we are finishing up development on Dolan right now and we are in the process of developing Somers now as well.

Max Fruchter: The project is expected to self-destruct in 25-30 years?

Evan Callahan: We will destruct it, it won't self-destruct.

Max Fruchter: If 4,000 homes that you assume to be generating electricity for you are anticipating \$8 million/yr.? How did you do the finances?

Sage Ezell: We bid into NYSERDA and receive a REC contract and a REC price and that is set and is the price for 20 years and then after that you can sell your REC credits to another entity and then you receive power prices.

Max Fruchter: Are the power prices similar to the black water where they have to buy your power?

Sage Ezell: We are going onto the grid so we are connecting into the utility grid so I don't know about black water.

Max Fruchter: Black water was for most of the dams in New York State that generate hydropower. The State mandated all the power companies to buy the power at a 20% premium so they could generate more hydropower.

Sage Ezell: We don't necessarily get a premium we get a REC contract which is a Renewable Energy Credit so in some ways there is some additional incentive that we do receive.

Max Fruchter: What is your anticipated revenue per year for this project?

Sage Ezell: I'm not sure what the anticipated revenue will be at this time. We are just selling the power and we receive the REC contract which is that set price.

Max Fruchter: Where are we getting our money from; is it based on the equipment, the value of the solar collectors or is it going to be based on the revenue you are generating?

Sage Ezell: If you mean based off the assessment then that is what Evan was talking about. We are having a difficult time figuring out how to appropriately assess projects. The State tried to help with this by putting out an assessment model for the PILOT structure of these projects. After that was published there were various lawsuits that were filed against it due to not allowing a comment period. There is a huge debate among Towns and developers as far as is it the equipment itself, the power or the revenue which obviously we can't afford to pay based off revenue generated.

Max Fruchter: Since you are in other States, do you know how they predicate the return on investment for local communities?

Sage Ezell: This is a problem that is across every single State.

Max Fruchter: You have been at this 18 years so somewhere in the 18 years you have a model of how much your assessment is going to generate per MW. I need to try to understand the basis of where people keep telling us that we are going to make this money. What is the financial incentive for the Planning Board to say we are going to accept this development vs. a developer putting a lot of houses there? This is a great development but I am just trying to figure out data.

Evan Callahan: The details of the PILOT agreement is the uncertainty but the way that the structure works is that we pretty much pay taxes separately and then they divide up that tax revenue so that a greater portion of the revenue is allocated toward the Town.

Max Fruchter: Does the property of the leases get impacted, for example the local farmer got impacted on his assessment because of the windmills.

Sage Ezell: The way that we like our projects to be assessed is that they receive a separate tax ID and are assessed independent of the parcel itself. Any improvement such as the solar panels would be assessed as a project entity and have their own tax ID.

Max Fruchter: Is that State mandated?

Sage Ezell: That is not necessarily State mandated and again that is another thing where different jurisdictions have different ways of assessing. That is the way we like to do it so that the landowner is not getting hit with a massive increase in assessment.

Valerie Ingersoll: Is the land that you are using farmland or vacant land?

Sage Ezell: The majority of it is farmland.

Dolores Cogan: There are wetlands and you will be doing some tree clearing correct?

Sage Ezell: There will be almost no tree clearing outside of the hedgerows that are present and then some shrub area.

Next Steps:

- Pursue Area Variance similar to what Dolan received in order to make a cohesive project
- On the project as a whole we are under the 40% lot coverage restriction but there is an issue that arises when we are looking at individual parcels so we are looking for clarification on whether we need to seek a variance for the lot coverage restriction that we will be going over on 2 of the parcels.
- We will continue meeting with the Town Board and Planning Board

Max Fruchter: You will need to contact the Fire Chief and tell him where the access road is going to be, where the cut off panel is and they will use it as a training exercise.

Dolores Cogan: As far as maintaining the solar panels how is that going to increase traffic in that area?

Sage Ezell: Maintenance shouldn't increase traffic that much at all; we tend to look for someone local that will perform the mowing and general things like that. During the summer that will be about 3 or 4 times to keep it at a reasonable level. We have a system online to detect when something goes offline which is pretty rare so it isn't like they will be coming out weekly or anything like that.

Dolores Cogan: So the major employment piece you were talking about is during construction?

Sage Ezell: Yes

Max Fruchter: How do you evaluate the local landscaping companies for the maintenance?

Sage Ezell: We will go out to bid. We try to source that locally I know a few times we have worked with tenant farmers or landowners themselves to do the operation and maintenance projects.

Max Fruchter: I would be interested to know who got the bid for the Easton project.

Dolores Cogan: Just in doing some reading on CS Energy you are predicting 70% renewable energy by 2030, are you on track for that?

Sage Ezell: There are different ways to look at meeting that goal, which is the State goal for 70% by 2030. Looking at the interconnection here in terms of just solar we would meet that but now looking at all of the different things that are impacting so what is the percentage of projects that will actually be successful? I think if even half of the renewable energy projects that in the interconnection here right now go forward we would meet that pretty easily so yes we are very solidly on track to meet that goal.

- Also as far as the Decommissioning Plan it is a very similar project to Dolan and we are wondering if the same sort of estimates are acceptable in terms of the Decommissioning Plan that we had last time or do we need to re-evaluate that

Aimee Mahoney: The Decommissioning Plan will be handled at the Town Board.

Evan Callahan: Part of the Decommissioning Plan is restoring the land back to its previous state so the agricultural land that we will build on will eventually be agricultural land again.

ADJOURNMENT:

MOTION by Dolores Cogan, Seconded by Joseph McMurray to adjourn the meeting at 7:45pm
ALL AYES

Dated: September 6, 2022

Aimee Mahoney, Clerk