

Town House

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**TOWN OF HAMPDEN
MASSACHUSETTS****Planning Board**

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John Matthews, Chair
Judge Robert Howarth
Phillip Schneider
Edward Loiko
Richard R. Green

**HAMPDEN PLANNING BOARD
PUBLIC HEARING MINUTES – CASE 2017-C
227 MILL ROAD – SOLAR FACILITY
Wednesday, June 7, 2017
Town House**

John Matthews, Chair, opened the Public Hearing at 7:15 PM. This hearing was scheduled on the application from Western Mass Electric (d/b/a Eversource Energy) for a proposed solar array at 227 Mill Road.

Members Present: John Matthews, Chair; Judge Robert Howarth, Phillip Schneider, Ed Loiko and Richard Green.

Introduction of Board Members: Mr. Matthews introduced the Planning Board Members.

Statement of Authority: Mr. Mathews read the Statement of Authority.

Legal Notice: Mr. Matthews read the following Legal Notice:

The Hampden Planning Board will hold a Special Meeting for a Public Hearing on Wednesday, June 7, 2017, at 7 PM in the Town House, 625 Main Street, Hampden, MA, on the application of Western Mass Electric (d/b/a Eversource Energy) of 107 Selden Street, Berlin, CT, for a Special Permit under Section 7.16 of the Hampden Zoning By-Laws for a ground mounted solar PV array (+/- 4,760 kW) within fenced enclosure screened from public view at 227 Mill Road. Information related to this application is on file in the Town Clerk's Office and is available for review by the public during normal business hours. For the Board, John Matthews, Chair, Hampden Planning Board. Published May 18 and 25, 2017 in the Hampden/Wilbraham Times.

Reports from Other Agencies: Board of Health reported they have no issue with the proposed changes. The Conservation Commission completed a site inspection at 227 Mill Road on 3/27/17 after receiving a request for determination of applicability from Eversource Energy for the proposed solar site. This matter was discussed at the Conservation meeting on 3/29/17 but was continued until Eversource received their determination letter from Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program. The Commission issued a negative determination on pm 5/17/17. The Conservation Commission has no issues with the request for a special permit at 227 Mill Road.

Applicant's Presentation/Board Questions: Stephen Wiche, Project Manager for Weston & Sampson, presented the project to the Board the plans to construct a solar array on 11.5 acres of fields on Mill Road. These ground-mounted arrays have the capacity to generate 3.6 megawatts of electricity. Mr. Wiche indicated that they are looking at Ameresco to construct the system. He also indicated to the Board the system will be smaller than originally proposed to the Board this was due to the 250' buffer from the power lines that run along the west end of the property.

Mr. Wiche indicated the panels will stand 8' tall. In order to avoid the Tennessee Gas Line, there will be two separate fenced-in areas as to not interfere with this right-of-way. Mr. Wiche noted that Conservation/Natural Heritage did approve the project with a provision that the panels be raised 6" off the ground so turtles could pass through the property.

Mr. Wiche stated they plan to install a white-washed horse fence with plantings and a screened hedge. Arborvitae will be maintained according to the Zoning Bylaws. Dogwood trees will be planted to give a “country” look. The meshed fence will be hidden behind the trees.

Audience Questions/Comments:

Susan Alston of 236 Mill Road raised a concern regarding the maintenance of the area outside of the fence. She asked who will cut the grass. Mr. Wiche stated that will be part of their maintenance plan and they should be maintained 2-4 times a year.

Judy Hatch asked how this will impact her electric bill. Mr. Wiche stated it will not affect her tax bill at all. It will be tax revenue for the Town of Hampden. Judy sees the land as agricultural and it should generate food not electricity.

David Corey of 88 Glenn Heather Lane asked what is used for ground cover between the panels. Mr. Wiche stated various types of grasses to maintain water erosion such as rye, Kentucky blue grass and two variations of fescue.

Susan Alston also asked how will the residents know who to contact. John Matthews stated Announcement signs, “No Trespassing” signs, and a sign with the solar facility owner’s name and telephone number are required conforming to the Zoning Bylaw.

Susan Alston also questions how long the construction will take. She is especially concerned with the noise. Mr. Wiche stated the construction will take place between 7 AM to 4 PM. He also stated about 1,000 posts will be installed. He doesn’t believe she would feel anything. Construction will likely be completed by the end of the year.

Decision: Edward Loiko made a motion to approve the proposed +/- 4,760 kW ground mounted solar PV array at 227 Mill Road, Hampden, Massachusetts. Richard Green seconded the motion. All in favor so approved (5-0) Richard Green seconded the motion. All in favor so approve (4-0). The Public Hearing adjourned at 8:03 PM.

cc: Assessor’s Office
Building Dept
Conservation Commission
Highway Dept.
Moderator
Selectmen
Zoning Board of Appeals
Office Files

Submitted by: Joanne Fiore, Adm. Assistant