

Durham Conservation Commission

November 29, 2023; 6:30 – 8:00 pm; Town Office

DCC Attendees: Jess Costa, Mike Friendly, Joe Roy

Guest Attendees: George Theborge, John Talbot, Juliet Caplinger

Nov 14th Community Resilience Select Board

- Resolution approved
- Heather recommended putting the letter of support on Town Website

Discovery Meeting for the Federal Emergency Management Agency's Risk MAP project in Androscoggin County, Dec 12th 1:30 pm (Jess and Mike attending virtually)

Latest updates to draft solar ordinance - comments from Juliet

Adding in long and short term maintenance requirement for visual buffer

Fencing – no industry standard; post and wire-mesh ag fencing would allow for more rural look; Jess noted durability/longevity and potential for wildlife entanglements should be considered

CC to revisit agricultural uses at a later phase (grazing and type of fencing)

Should the ordinance reference Size/acres/sq. footage or MW; MW is industry standard and relates to connection to the grid whereas size is related to land impacts; site plans will speak to MWs

- Size/acres depends on set backs
- Readfield ordinance had both
- Topsham includes just square feet
- State standards and megawatt targets

Certification that project meets applicable state and national codes and standards, reviewed by consultant during site plan development (like civil engineer signing off on road design)

Additional language regarding site plan requirements from Juliet's email (a-c and h) included on site plans to be included in draft solar ordinance (George to add back in)

Rotating vs fixed specifications (type of mount related to impacts to ground water)

Ordinance now references underground utilities, but should say overhead may be used if... water crossing, won't meet codes, etc ... George to add back in a caveat underground 'unless agencies or electrical engineer indicates not possible'

Runoff needs to be addressed in stormwater plan

Will have time after town meeting to update draft ordinance

Overview of model ordinance guidelines for Battery Energy Storage Systems (BESS)

George has been approached for 4 projects proposed by MCE to help mitigate peak demand periods to help stabilize the system

Will include a subsection section regarding storage in solar ordinance; George will use NY template and Medway Maine to draft subsection

Including storage with solar project proposals is becoming common in the industry

Prep for Dec 7th Draft Solar Ordinance Community Meeting

- Joe will give an introduction
- Want to relay that Durham has no standards, and Town Planner is seeing proposals
- What could happen without standards (currently there could be solar development anywhere in town under conditional use permit, \$225 fee currently) – want to make sure projects follow standards for things like glare, visual impacts
- DCC and town planner presenting Draft ordinance overview to get town feedback
- DCC Research phase, talked to Topsham CC and Energy Commission chairs, reviewed other town ordinances and Maine Audubon template
- Focusing on the construction standards now in this initial phase, suitable location standards later
- George will prep powerpoint and send to DCC to review, Joe primary speaker from DCC, George will send DCC ppt to review early next week
- Visual and agricultural impacts likely the biggest concern

Draft Ordinance needs to go to planning board in January (won't have time for a town survey) so will process the feedback we get from attendees on December 7th.

Meeting adjourned at 8 pm. Next CC meeting will be December 20.