

# TOWN OF EAST BLOOMFIELD

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Planning Board Minutes  
April 18, 2024

**Planning Board Members Present:** Julie Pellett, Daniel Compton, Dan Morley, Kim Duvall, Michelle Rhoda, Mike Woodruff, Kimberly Gebo

**Others Present:** Kim Rayburn (Building & Zoning), Christel Daggett (Planning & Zoning Secretary) Jacob Arner (Applicant), Mark Potter & Andrew Van Doorn (Labella/Abundant Solar)

**Pellett opened the meeting at 7:35**

## **I. Special Use Permit, TSP2-24 Owner Jacob Arner (Agent Mark Potter)**

**Labella/Abundant Solar** Energy System 135-83.3. Property located on Rice Road Tax Map # 54.00-1-74.210. Proposed 4.482 MWAC Large Scale Solar Energy System.

Potter stated that they adjusted their proposal from the questions and concerns that the Board had about buffering and design of the proposed project. The entrance will come off of Rice Rd. The utility will be connected into the utility line as Rice Rd was the best spot. They reduced the 5 MW area to 4.482 of what was left of the maximum 10 MW that is in the Code. They reduced the panels and left more room from the State Route to the panels. The distance is 130/140 ft from the fence line to the property line. The site is great for grading. It is nice & flat. There are no wetlands besides the upper north corner where the receding stream and receding wetlands are that goes off site, so they are able to keep it separate they don't have to worry about storm water problems.

There was an in-depth discussion on landscaping and buffering. For the landscaping they discussed what kind of trees should be used. The Board would like to see a row of Green Giant trees that can grow up to 40 ft. and an 8 ft. board fence that you can't see through instead of the trees with some blooming bushes in front, or a garden array of flowering plants. Potter stated they will work on all suggestions.

Woodruff stated that Potter may want to have a discussion with the last farmer that farmed the land to discuss what kind of herbicides or pesticides he may have put on the land because Fur and Pine are susceptible to some of the agricultural stuff that is put on the ground and there may be residue from the spray that would kill the trees.

Compton stated maybe have Abundant put a couple props out to see what it would look like. Morley stated that it would still be difficult to imagine when you put a couple of props out there and did not think it to be unreasonable as he has seen in other code that they ask them to produce an electronic rendering of the view. When they have the Public Hearing, the public could have a visual of what is being proposed.

There was a brief discussion about what type of fencing should be used for screening. The Board discussed the Pros and Cons of composite, wooden, and chain link fencing. Abundant is proposing an American wire and wood Post Fence.

Compton asked what happens to the 100 ft. road bank? Who maintains that? The distance from the Right of Way is 66 Ft. Abundant stated they could mow that stretch or put some low grow pollinator grass seed blend that you can mow, and it would still be a pollinator at the same time so, you have 100 ft. of pollinator's up to the bushes. The Board could write that as a condition of the Special Use Permit.

Duvall asked if there was anything being farmed there right now? Arner stated that not at this moment but, he would like to do something there after the Solar is put in.

There was more discussion on maybe doing away with the wooden fence and focus more on Green Giants as they are deer resistant arborvitaes. They would plant them 10 ft off center all the way around, making it a green hedge all the way down. They would keep the height at 12 ft.

Gebo asked who maintains the inside? VanDoorn stated that it is Abundant. They are responsible for the operations and maintenance. They will maintain the vegetation by mowing up to 4 times a year to keep it at 18 inches or lower. Arner would like to keep agricultural activities inside the fence. He would like to plant strawberries in between the rows of panels. If Arner was to change his mind, then Abundant would be responsible for the vegetation.

Compton asked Abundant how long they plan on owning the solar field. VanDoorn stated the contract is for 25 years.

Morley stated that in the plan he didn't see a glare study or what direction the panels go in if the neighbors will see a glare at certain times of the day. He asked if that was required? Van Doorn stated that it is not a requirement. Documentation shows the panels are at an angle and with the nature of the glass they have no glare. They tip south at 30 degrees and are fixed. They will be at the same height all the time. They absorb light from the sun, not reflect it off. The wiring is underground, the only wires you will see is from the panels.

Morley stated that he read through the Town Code and Decommissioning Plan and did not see where they had any recourse if the construction stops before it is finished and asked if the Planning Board had an ability to put any kind of condition on the approval of the Special Use Permit to add something that talks about the stopping of the construction. There should be something for the Planning Board to be able to give them in some kind of notice stating they have to finish within a certain time period, or they will start the Decommissioning Plan. Rayburn stated that makes sense but was not sure if they did that with the other ones. Potter stated that he believes that there is wording included if construction ceases for 60 days.

There was a brief discussion about the next steps. The Planning Board agreed that they would like to see the visual changes that they discussed in the meeting before the Public Hearing is held to make any necessary changes. They will meet again on 5.2.2024 to see the changes to the proposal.

Gebo asked if there were any benefits for the community as far as electricity goes? VanDoorn stated that you only receive one bill. It's roughly a 10% discount. Once subscribed you will see about a 10% discount on your average yearly energy bill. There will be signage on the outside of the gate that gives information on how to subscribe.

There were no further comments.

**Compton motioned Morley seconded to** table the discussion on the existing code for SUP (for each event) on 50 acres or more for 5.2.2024.

#### **Record of Vote:**

**Pellett Aye Compton Aye Woodruff Aye Morley Aye Duvall Aye Rhoda Aye Gebo Aye  
Vote was carried unanimously.**

### **Topics for review 2024**

- 1.** Continued review of the Comprehensive Plan's suggested updates for zoning districts changes.
- 2.** 5 G placement of antenna's
- 3.** Battery Storage
- 4.** More research and code considerations for cannabis in the future
- 5.** Look at the schedules for any items that need to be updated or clarified.
- 6.** Discussion on MW max for Large Scale Solar- hold off until all existing projects are completed.

### **III. Meeting Adjourned**

**Woodruff motioned and Rhoda seconded to adjourn @ 9:00 pm.**

Respectfully submitted,

Christel Daggett  
Planning & Zoning Board Secretary