

**Planning Board Minutes**

January 16, 2025

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

**Others Present:** Kim Rayburn (Building & Zoning), Christel Daggett (Planning & Zoning Secretary), Kathy Conratt (Town Board Member), Colin Diehl (Resident of the community)

**I. Planning Board Solar Workshop:**

Kathy Conratt is on the Town Board and is head of the Comprehensive Plan Committee. Conratt stated that they adopted the Comprehensive plan in 2020 and did a review of it at that time. In theory it would have been reviewed annually to keep it up to date, they are now going into year 5 of the 10-year plan. Conratt needs a volunteer member from each Board to attend meetings. What she is proposing is to look at all of the recommendations that they made in 2020 to see what they accomplished, see if the rest are still appropriate and see if they want to add any new recommendations going forward into the next 5 years. Her goal is to start in February or March and would like to have at least one member from each Town and Village Boards and members that are in Agriculture, Business, residential, and school related professions. She is currently forming a 10-member committee and will need to try to get a date and time and which day of the week to meet. Duvall stated that she would be interested in being on the committee.

Rayburn stated that when the Planning Board met with the solar attorney Dylan Harris, he stated that if the Board decided that they didn't want any more solar they needed "*teeth*" in the code. To make it come to provision then there needed to be more in the Comp Plan as well as in their code. Rayburn suggested the Comp Plan Board might want to have a meeting with Harris. The Board may want to wait to make any permanent changes to the code until the Comp Plan has done their piece. Woodruff agreed.

Rayburn supplied the Board with some research she collected from a few other Town's Code for Solar to see how they compared with Bloomfield's code. A brief discussion was held on:

**Accessory Structure Setbacks:** Setbacks are requirements to offset structures from property lines. Accessory structure setbacks are usually less restrictive than setbacks required for principal structures, and therefore are appropriate for ground-mounted solar. However, other towns are between 100 to 300 feet from a residence our code currently is 40 feet. The Board feels they would like to discuss changing our setbacks in the future.

**Overlay Zoning Districts:** Overlay zoning districts are one zoning approach that could be used to permit solar energy systems, and in ways not allowed under the base zoning districts. For example, the model zoning as drafted requires Site Plan Review for medium-scale ground mounted solar energy systems in residential districts. An overlay district could be used to permit such facilities without Site Plan Review in a portion of these residential districts where Site Plan Review is deemed unnecessary, while retaining the review for the balance of the districts.

In addition, some communities may wish to conduct a feasibility analysis to determine where large-scale solar energy systems are most appropriate within the municipality and use an overlay zoning district approach to encourage the siting of facilities in the most feasible locations. Once an area has been established through a thoughtful and analytical process, the municipality could enact.

Rayburn wanted to know the difference between overlay district and a Special Use Permit. She stated an overlay to her is extra criteria and regulations than what's already there. That is also what a Special Use Permit (SUP) does. The Town already has a SUP with setbacks, height restrictions, and extra regulations that must be met.

Conratt stated that an overlay district is a little different. A SUP has very specific guidelines on a one at a time application. An overlay district is intended more where you look at an area, where you think it might be appropriate for that kind of use. If you define it as an overlay district it boosts the standards because you have already said "we feel this is an area that is appropriate for this kind of development."

Rayburn stated that is where she was going with the zoning. The Code currently allows large scale solar in all districts, maybe they need to adjust where they want to allow them with the SUP. They could do an overlay if there is a whole area that is multi districts.

Kathy Conradt invited Colin Diehl to the workshop to help give some insight into solar. Diehl is a resident of Bloomfield. He owns an ecological consulting firm. They work on an average of 60-70 community solar projects a year doing environmental and agricultural monitoring for NYSDAM. Diehl also worked for MRB Group, was on the Zoning Board of Appeals for The City of Canandaigua for 2 years and has a project that was built in his backyard Diehl stated that he is here to help as a resource.

Diehl stated that having a project being bult in his backyard were things he didn't think about until it was happening. The biggest nuisance he experienced was the pile driving and noise. Noise mitigation should be seriously considered. Compton suggested for a noise barrier they could have companies set up 25' movable portable screens where they could pile drive an area, move the screen over do another pile and so on. They could also do noise suppression. Pile driven systems that are like attachments to the pile drivers to suppress the sound like a sensor. Diehl stated that he had to listen to the noise for 8 weeks, 6 days a week at 10 hours per day during the summer.

A discussion was held on retaining farmland. Diehl stated that one of his business partners teaches at Cornell and they are trying to work with farmers and teach them how to graze their own solar projects on their own land. Farmers want to keep on farming but farmers by default will take the land that they don't want to farm anymore and give it to the solar companies. The farmers don't want to give up their best land. They will give up their wet soils.

Diehl stated that his feedback to the town would be:

- What do the voters want?
- What have the landowners come back and say to the Board in terms of how does it impact their property?
- Is it good, bad, or indifferent?

Diehl stated that the Board is affecting landowner rights by saying they are going to take away the ability for them to site solar on their property because they are going to restrict it to certain areas. As a landowner he would have a problem with that.

Gebo stated that the last time that the public was at the meeting for the Rice Rd project they had concerns with their taxes, were they going to be raised, or their property values may go down, would it make them sick, and how are they going to look? The Board agreed that they need to hear what the Community thinks about solar.

A brief discussion was held on battery storage. Diehl stated that there are differences between technology and batteries. There is Lithium battery technology and sodium ion battery technology that is taking over Lithium. Which is safer and less explosive the more you learn about it, it is safer than Lithium. Rayburn stated that we need to do some further research for future discussion.

A brief discussion was held on the 3-phase line map that Rayburn handed out from her research on solar. Rayburn stated that anyone can go out to the websites to see them. There are red, green, & yellow lines saying what they mean. Rayburn stated that Compton had asked for them before:

- Where is the 3 phase now?
- Where do they already have it?
- Where are the transfer stations where they can hook up into it and upgrade the lines?

Rayburn stated that when they were first talking about solar, they were told that it would regulate itself because there were only so many substations here.

Woodruff stated that they were told they would not need to worry about solar expanding that much because there were only so many substations that would take I, only to find out that you can put a solar project here and use a substation in Canandaigua.

Diehl Stated that its according to the solar developers in terms of what they have access to, but they are also in a huge push to upgrade a lot of substations into what they call thermal Capacity of transformers which is, the main restriction in substations. There are companies out there that can take the heat out of an object and turn it into electrical battery storage technology at the substation. So, they are taking all these things and are fixing them. Deihl suggested that the Board be prepared for more solar projects. Maybe add more things like prime Ag lands, wetlands. You could go to multiple sources like or look at DEC maps.

## **II. Topics for future review –**

1. Review of existing code for a SUP (for each event) on 50 acres or more for event centers that could exist with less acreage
2. 5 G placement of antenna's
3. Battery Storage
4. More research and code considerations for cannabis in the future
5. Look into code for event centers vs current code that allows for a SUP for each event on 50 acres or more
6. Look at the schedules for any items that need to be updated or clarified.
7. Look into the minimum and maximum size for a tiny home.

The Board will do continue the discussion at the 2.06.2025 meeting. The workshop ended at 8:45 Pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Christel Daggett  
Planning & Zoning Board Secretary