

Village of Aurora Board of Trustees March 26, 2019 Work Session Minutes

The meeting was held at the Aurora Firehouse Meeting Room at 4:00 p.m.

Present: Mayor Bonnie Bennett, Trustees Grace Bates, Matt Bianconi, and Alan Ominsky

Absent: Kit Van Orman

Others Present: Village Clerk Ann Balloni, Wells College Sustainability Director Marion Brown and Inns of Aurora General Manager Sue Edinger

Call to Order: Mayor Bennett called the work session to order at 4:05 p.m.

Solar Law

Mayor Bennett clarified that the draft of the law that the Board is working from does indeed include Attorney Blair's recommendations. The section requiring surety bonds from both the Site Developer and the Project Developer is standard language, per Mr. Blair, and should not be removed.

The Village Board reviewed Village Historian, Dr. Linda Schwab's, recommended changes (attached) to some of the law's language. Under C.5. and D.1.(e), Dr. Schwab advised referring to the Department of Interior Standards and relevant technical publications as clearer guides for the Community Preservation Panel to follow. Under section 409.E.3.h., Dr. Schwab advised changing "natural" to "native" regarding vegetative screening and to strike "equivalent plantings" as it is too vague and confusing. Dr. Schwab recommended that the sentence in section G.1. read "Removal of trees shall be minimized and/or mitigated." Period.

Regarding the allowed area of disturbance for large-scale solar systems, Dr. Schwab questioned if the 20 acres includes easements or just the area for the array. It is unclear in the law.

Mayor Bennett recommended that the Village Board amend Local Law #2 of 2019 with Dr. Schwab's changes.

Marian Brown addressed her main concern that Large-Scale arrays are only permitted in the Institutional Zone. The Poplar Ridge Road site that Wells College is considering for a 20-acre array is partially in the Agricultural/Residential Zone.

The Village Board discussed re-zoning the parcel Institutional due to discomfort with allowing arrays in the Agricultural/Residential Zone. Mr. Bianconi questioned Ms. Brown on re-siting the array so it is completely in the Town of Ledyard, but Ms. Brown replied that it could have a negative effect on Fry road residents.

Mayor Bennett voiced her discomfort with allowing any Large-Scale arrays in the Village. Mr. Bianconi argued that the Poplar Ridge site is away from the Village Center, close to the Village/Town border and will have minimal effect on neighbors. Mr. Bianconi also remarked that the Poplar Ridge site is a "good compromise" from the initial Main St site and strengthens good relations between the Village and Wells College.

Mayor Bennett countered that the Poplar Ridge site could be developed for housing. Mayor Bennett noted that the site is one of the few places where the Village can expand and emphasized her belief that affordable housing is needed in the Village for employees of the Inns, Wells College and Mackenzie Childs. Mr. Bianconi noted that Wells College owns the property and has not indicated any interest in selling to a housing developer.

On motion by Trustee Ominsky, seconded by Mayor Bennett, the Village Board voted to amend Local Law #2 of 2019 to disallow Large-Scale solar arrays in the Village of Aurora.

AYES: Bennett and Ominsky

NAYS: Bates and Bianconi

Motion denied.

Mr. Bianconi voiced his frustration that, given Trustee Van Orman's recusal from the solar discussions, the Board is deadlocked on a two-two vote. Mr. Bianconi questioned if the Board will now only work on regulating Small-Scale solar

arrays, but Mayor Bennett explained that, since the amendment vote was denied, the proposed law remains as is. The Trustees agreed to continue their discussion to regulate solar at a later date.

Adjournment: On motion by Trustee Bates, seconded by Mayor Bennett, the Village Board voted to adjourn the meeting at 5:30 p.m.

AYES: Bennett, Bates, Bianconi and Ominsky

NAYS: None

Motion carried unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Ann Balloni
Village Clerk