

## Village of Aurora Board of Trustees August 20, 2019 Work Session Minutes

The meeting was held at the Aurora Firehouse Meeting Room at 9:00 a.m.

**Present:** Mayor Bonnie Bennett, Trustees Grace Bates, Matt Bianconi (9:30), Janet Murphy and Kit Van Orman

### **Others Present**

**Village Officials:** Village Clerk Ann Balloni and Planning Board member Pat Foser (9:25)

**Barton & Loguidice:** Charles Voss

**Wells College:** Director of Sustainability Marian Brown, Planner Chris Carrick and Attorney Brody Smith

**Call to Order:** Mayor Bennett called the work session to order at 9:20 a.m., gave a brief overview of solar discussions and introduced Mr. Voss from Barton & Loguidice. Mr. Voss was hired as a consultant to give a recommendation on regulating solar arrays in the village.

Mr. Voss explained that he toured the village and reviewed the Proposed Solar Law, the Village Comprehensive Plan and Zoning Law.

Mr. Voss discussed several issues with the Board of Trustees, including:

#### **A. The relationship of the proposed solar law with the Comprehensive Plan.**

- Mr. Voss emphasized updating the comprehensive plan so there is a clear vision for the Village. The current version is lacking a long-term development plan which he views as essential to help guide the Village forward.
- Mr. Voss stressed the importance of community input and advised forming a committee consisting of Board members, residents, Wells College and Inns of Aurora representatives, coupled with public hearings.
- Mr. Voss noted the significance of the Historic District and desire to preserve open spaces and lake views in the current comprehensive plan, which runs counter to allowing large arrays in residential/agricultural zoning districts. However, Mr. Voss added that large arrays in the Institutional Zone were more appropriate, depending on the location, but required a degree of creativity from the applicants.

Trustee Bianconi questioned if the Comprehensive Plan should be updated ahead of adopting a solar law. Mr. Voss replied that, since the Village Board has been working on the solar law for a year, that it would be unreasonable to table adoption of the law. However, Mr. Voss reminded the Board that they can amend a law at any time if a solar issue comes up during their update of the Comprehensive Plan, after the law is enacted.

Mr. Voss also strongly advised extending the moratorium on solar arrays by amending Local Law #4 of 2018 while the trustees continue their solar discussion.

#### **B. Proposed Solar Law**

- Mr. Voss advised including site considerations in the proposed law, particularly to retain agricultural land and open spaces for potential future development. Mr. Voss also noted that soil conditions and mature forests should be maintained, as well as, protecting trees and vegetation near and along the lake shore to reduce run-off.
- Mr. Voss recommended revising the definitions section for a more thorough list and adding an appeals process.
- Mr. Voss also recommended solar easements to protect solar arrays from future neighboring development.

#### **C. Proposed Wells College Alternative Site**

Mr. Voss recommended consideration of the land along Fry Road as an alternate site for the following reasons:

- The land is in the Town of Ledyard and the Town allows large solar arrays with a Special Use Permit
- Minimal tree removal is required, and an existing hedgerow could be moved further east for screening/buffering
- Close proximity to the campus

- Does not require a Use Variance or Zone Change unlike the sites proposed by Wells College (Mr. Voss noted that a Zone Change could be perceived as “spot zoning” and possibly set a problematic legal precedent for future projects)

Ms. Brown replied that the Fry Road site is unlikely due to complaints from Fry Road residents and lack of support for the site from the Town of Ledyard. Mr. Carrick added that the Poplar Ridge Road site does not have any residents and is, therefore, preferable to Fry Road.

Ms. Foser responded that the Comprehensive Plan protects viewsheds and the view coming down Poplar Ridge Road should be preserved.

Trustee Bates questioned how the Village can balance historic preservation with allowing solar energy projects. Mr. Voss suggested surveying Village residents to gauge their thoughts on siting solar arrays on land within the Village. Mr. Voss cautioned, however, that a survey be objective, include no more than 10 questions and be completely independent of the Wells College proposal.

The Village Board tentatively scheduled a work session on the proposed solar law for Thursday, August 29, 2019 at 8:30 p.m.

**Adjournment:** On motion by Trustee Bates, seconded by Trustee Bianconi, the Village Board voted to adjourn the meeting at 10:50 a.m.

AYES: Bennett, Bates, Bianconi, Murphy and Van Orman

NAYS: None

Motion carried unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Ann Balloni  
Village Clerk