**MUNICIPAL SOLAR OVERSIGHT**

**COMMITTEE**

**Monday, October 25th, 2021**

 **At 4:30 PM, Zoom Meeting**

**Attendees:** George Aronson, Chair; Rob Maidman, Chris Pimentel, Xander Shapiro, Alexander Tomic, David Ruggiero, Town Energy Manager

**Minutes**

Minutes from the meeting on 30 August 2021 had not been approved at prior meetings due to absence of a quorum. A motion to approve was moved and seconded and passed by unanimous vote (5-0).

**Status of existing projects**

Heights Elementary School solar PV rooftop and battery project

* The website indicated lifetime production of 197 MWh to date.
* Enel X has received the building permit and Fire Dept. approval for the battery, and is awaiting final approval of the interconnection application to Eversource, which is expected by mid-November. The project would then move to installation of the battery.
* Need to confirm that the electricity bills for Heights Elementary properly reflects the solar PV project. *David R will get and review bills.*

High School solar PV rooftop and battery project

* Solect has applied to Eversource for the interconnection. Project size is less than 1 MW: 426.66 kWAC solar PV, 572.00 kWAC battery storage, total is 998.66 kWAC. Eversource will determine whether a follow-up system impact study is needed. Response is expected in December or January.
* Solect is preparing project-specific versions of the Power Options standard PPA, Site Lease, battery storage and PILOT agreements in anticipation of Eversource approval.

Gavins Pond Solar PV Canopy. No activity. Waiting in queue for Eversource to begin the interconnection study.

Mountain Street Landfill Solar PV Project.

* Still waiting for the ISO-NE ASO interconnection study due in November.
* DSD has found a new battery supplier to replace the model no longer available with another unit of approximately the same size and capacity. DSD will file an amended interconnection application with Eversource and anticipates approval by January 2022.
* MassDEP responded to DSD with written comments on the application for a Post-Closure Use Permit, which were circulated to the Committee. Regarding proposed visual mitigation, the design appears to have sufficient buffer space, and the plantings are outside the limits of waste, which should address MassDEP concerns. Concerns were raised regarding need to avoid soil penetrations, adequacy of setbacks from gas wells and general readiness of DSD to respond without causing delay. DSD has advised that the response will be circulated to the Committee for comments by early next week.
* DSD will need to go before Conservation Commission regarding construction in the wetlands buffer zone and has asked for guidance on when to start the process. Rob M advised that the Conservation Agent has resigned and has not yet been replaced*. Rob M will check with the ConComm Chair for advice on how to proceed* (see below).

**Planning for next round of projects**

**Middle School solar PV canopy.** Xander has been in contact with Tony Kopacz, who is supportive. More feedback to come from the Middle School principal. General plan is to (a) get more feedback on the scope of where solar PV installation would be acceptable; (b) develop materials to illustrate design options; (c) begin the “neighbor discovery process” (discussions with individual abutters) to get a sense of issues without losing control of the process; and (d) proceed with vendor procurement when the issues are identified and options for the scope of the project are better understood. Goal is to begin neighbor discovery process in November.

Chris P mentioned concerns with solar canopy project viability, especially for small projects (looking at range of 250 to 400 kW for the Middle School). Steel prices are up, and incentives are being reduced.

George A noted that the capacity of the Middle School and Pond Street projects is reduced by the 60-foot zoning setbacks. If the setbacks were reduced or waived or made not applicable, the solar PV projects might be designed to be larger and might be more likely to be economic. Also true for the Pond Street parking lot project. Rob mentioned that the Town Planning Board is overseeing a process to review the entire zoning code one-by-line for clarity, consistency and conformity to state law. George A asked if the SMOC might suggest that the zoning code incorporate special reduced setbacks for solar PV projects on public land. Rob M advised that special reduced setbacks might be considered “spot zoning” as an exception to a rule for a specific purpose, which would not be appropriate. Rather, Rob M suggested that the SMOC prepare to comment on the draft zoning code when released before the warrant is finalized for Town Meeting (that is, between February and April 2022). Until then, the Committee could consider draft designs with and without relief on the setbacks, which could provide a basis for comments. The extra capacity from a reduced setback might be important, because “every inch counts” toward project economic viability.

There was concern that DSD and Solect might not be interested in new small solar PV canopy projects. *George will check with DSD and Solect.*

**Pond Street (Ames Field) parking lot solar PV canopy**. The next step is to contact Linda Berger of the Rec Department regarding general approach and issues. *George will make the contact.*

**Sharon Public Library** is now moving forward – but is the design solar ready? George will check with Gordon Gladstone of the Standing Building Committee.

**Well #5 ground-mount solar PV**. Not discussed at the meeting

**Other comments:**

* Sharon Day was a good engagement experience with lots of resident interest in Town solar activities.
* Rob M asked if it would be possible for the SMOC to provide an update on solar activities at the next Town Meeting? Will raise with Fred Turkington.
* Next meeting: Monday November 8 at 4:30. Back-up date Wednesday, November 10.

**Meeting adjourned at 5:45 pm**

**Communications after the meeting**

1. ConComm has multiple applicants for the Conservation Agent position. ComComm hopes to make a hiring decision by the end of 2021. The Chair advised that filing should proceed on a normal schedule, although review might be delayed (from Rob M).
2. DPW may be installing a building to house PFAS treatment equipment adjacent to Well #2 and inquired about the potential to install solar PV panels on the building (from Silas F).