

**Town of North Yarmouth
Solar Research Committee
Meeting Minutes of Monday, November 30, 2020**

Call to Order – Solar Research Committee members: Byron Kern, Chris Byers, Andy Walsh, and Kelly Walker were present. Austin Harrell, Selectperson, and Executive Assistant, Draven Walker, were also present at the meeting.

Byron Kern moved to appoint himself as chairperson of the Solar Research Committee. Kelly Walker seconded the motion. Discussion: Byron informed the committee that he had plenty of time to take on the responsibility as chairman. **Vote: 5 Yes – 0 No.**

Minutes of Previous Meeting(s) – None.

Old Business – None.

New Business:

Introduction to online GIS maps – The Executive Assistant presented the GIS maps currently on the town's website to the committee.

Future Projects – Andy spoke about a possible site at the Old Town Dump as a site to have a solar farm. Andy also stated that the Town owned another 100 acres in town, including the old pit. Andy also mentioned the PACE program as a financial solution for the committee to explore and advertise. Chris Byers was not sure if the program was available in the State of Maine.

Chris explained why providing education to the public was important for towns when seeking solar opportunities. Chris also explained the constraints associated with developing solar farms in municipalities:

- Location
- Three phase proximity
- Interconnection costs

Chris stated that the committee could discuss two different scenarios: the town could look into providing solar benefits to its town facilities or on how to cultivate solar projects for town use. Chris stated that the difficulty and consumption of the group's time could be how the town should develop solar projects that are helpful for the town's residents, are viable, and that are also supported by state policy.

Chris stated the town could ask a solar developer to develop on town-owned property. Kelly Walker stated that she would like to see the homeowners surveyed to understand the perception of a third-party entity developing in North Yarmouth. Chris suggested that the Select Board and Planning Board should conduct workshops to discuss solar options and, later on, an "open house" or forum with the town. When asked by the Executive Assistant on what a workshop would look like for the two boards, Chris explained that a workshop should start with a discussion on policy then further discuss any questions/concerns the board members may have.

The committee also discussed how the town could benefit financially from solar projects. Chris explained that the developer of the project can apply for an exemption for paying personal property taxes for the project through the state and the town can apply to be reimbursed for 50% of the total amount of taxes applied for that project. Chris, however, stated that reimbursement for the State could be unsustainable for the future. Andy and Chairperson Kern asked if the town could negotiate the lease payment with an outside developer. Chris explained that a lease payment is not very flexible.

Chairperson Kern asked if the town could benefit from a low-risk investment towards a solar farm. Andy answered that the town does not have the capability to purchase and own a solar farm through tax funds. Also, Andy further explained the challenges of getting other funding projects approved by the residents for a solar farm. The Executive Assistant asked if the project could be funded through a capital reserve fund. Andy asked how much a solar project would cost for the town. Chris stated that financing a solar project is expensive and required additional costs in the long term.

Andy asked about the current agreement (PPA) between the town and Revision energy for the solar panels located at the Wescustogo Hall & North Yarmouth Community Center. Chris explained that the PPA agreement was a common option for organizations with no tax liability. Kelly mentioned that after the amount of time defined by a PPA has expired, the solar panels will be well depreciated. Chris explained that the PPA for the town was created to benefit both parties by providing Revision a 30% tax credit and the town ownership of the solar panels in ten (10) years. Chris explained that benefiting from tax credit for the solar panels would require additional parties (LLC's) to accomplish. Andy explained that Revision also passed on part of the savings of the tax credit to the town. There was discussion on three-phase-power to for the purpose of explaining the requirements of interconnection between a solar farm and transmission lines. Chris stated that anything beyond one (1) mile from those lines would be considered not feasible. Chris also mentioned that an important information for the committee to find out is what the capacity of the substation(s) is in North Yarmouth. Chris, however, mentioned that that town may only be able to serve three (3) solar projects due to the limitation of the local substation. Chris also mentioned that the committee could reach out to RLC Engineering in Falmouth for assistance in knowing what is possible for a solar project in North Yarmouth.

Chris mentioned that he would look further into town-owned properties and their related features that concern a possible solar project. Chris asked Executive Assistant to provide the town owned properties to him. Chairperson Kern asked Chris if there was a checklist that could be developed before the town could have an RFP that would assist the committee in their research. Chris stated that he would build a schedule to assist the committee. Andy Walsh also stated that he would like to see an education component be another goal for the committee.

- Checklist – what the Select Board/town staff will need to do to cultivate solar projects in North Yarmouth (Byron)
- Education – how community members could develop solar on their own properties and how the town should communicate solar opportunities to residents (Andy)

Meeting Schedule – By consensus, the committee chose to meet on December 14, 2020 at 6:30 PM.

Any Other Business – none.

Adjournment - Chairperson Kern moved to adjourn.

Prepared By: Draven Walker
Executive Assistant/Recording Secretary