

**Town of Charlotte
Selectboard Meeting
October 3, 2011**

Approved November 14, 2011

Members Present: John Owen, Winslow Ladue, Charles Russell, Edward Stone, Dennis Delaney

Interview Daniel Raabe for vacancy on the Zoning Board of Adjustment: *Action under consideration: make appointment to complete the term of Louis Laberge to April 2013*

Mr. Raabe has previously served on the Planning Commission.

Mr. Russell asked the question of using rules vs. common sense. Mr. Raabe stated that he would try to amend or change some rules if necessary.

Mr. Stone asked why he resigned from the Planning Commission. Mr. Raabe explained that he was on call for his practice and was too busy, but that he is working less now. Mr. Stone went on to say that they are looking for someone to serve out the term for the sake of continuity and Mr. Raabe agreed and said that his work is no longer an issue, that he is free on nights and weekends.

Mr. Owen asked what skills he had to offer. Mr. Raabe mentioned that he had served on various boards and that he has business experience, no special skills other than that.

Mr. Delaney asked Mr. Raabe to define common sense. Mr. Raabe stated that common sense reflects the majority view and draws the same conclusion.

Mr. Raabe was asked if he was ever complimented on his common sense and he said yes. He is analytical and logical and does not get riled easy.

Public comment: (?) stated that some people on the Board might see the appointment as a vehicle to an end – he used his greenhouse as an example. Mr. Raabe noted that this was not his intention.

Regular Meeting Called to Order at 7:01

Adjustment to Agenda: None

Minutes: September 26: Not available

Public Comment: Spin Richardson stated concerns with the loss of the Post Office. There is the possibility of Charlotte operating out of Shelburne and Ferrisburg and North Ferrisburg operating out of Vergennes. He would like to charge the Selectboard with representing the Town in this matter.

Mr. Russell asked if the closure was dependant on money.

The question was also asked when the lease is up and the answer is unknown, thoughts were possibly a year.

Heather Pierce – application for Highway Access Permit (HAP-11-11) for an access on Dorset St. to serve a proposed residential building lot. *Action under consideration: approve application:*

Trapton Crandall present, Ms. Pierce is out of town.

The sketch plan was reviewed and the question was asked about what the Planning Commission had recommended.

When asked when she wanted this completed, Mr. Crandall stated that the waste water permit was not completed yet.

Mr. Stone stated that he would like a site visit, but recommends one access for the two lots.

There was a review of the survey and the placement of the posts.

Mr. Owen pointed out that there is a big distance from the lot to the existing driveway.

A recommendation was made to wait and discuss this with the Planning Commission.

Mr. Owen motioned for preliminary approval – Mr. Stone seconded – all in favor.

Town wastewater pump station repair. Action under consideration: *authorize replacement of pump and related repairs:*

Only one estimate is available \$5685.80. A question was asked by the public why there have been no more bids and it was explained that the Board went out for more, but did not hear back.

A question was asked by the public what the issue was and Mr. Russell explained that one of the pumps is broken. Currently, due to the construction it is not easy to fix. This bid includes re-doing with stainless steel rails to make repairs easier in the future.

Mr. Stone motioned to authorize replacement and repair with the current bid – Mr. Owen seconded – all in favor.

Power Purchase Agreement with All Earth Renewables to buy or lease 14 solar trackers capable of producing 60 kW for three-five year periods, or lease land where trackers are located to All Earth Renewables. *Discussion only.*

Opportunity for The Town to lease 14 solar trackers for 15 years. There is \$1K required up front with a gain of \$4K after the 15 years. Three properties have been looked at, the other two being the Flea Market which was too shady and the old dump site which has no power poles.

If we work with All Earth Renewables a power purchase agreement is needed by the end of the month.

At this time The Board is looking for feedback from the Public.

Summary points of the discussion would be: 1. The public is very much in favor of using renewable energy but does not want the landscape scarred by the solar trackers. 2. Most people are very much opposed to the site at Thompson's Point. The area behind Town Hall seemed very popular. 3. This project is not about making money. 4. There is too big of a rush to make a decision.

The following is a more detailed account of the discussion.

Mr. Stone asked if the shade could be eliminated at the flea market site. It was noted that the extra expense of tree removal could make that location less desirable.

A Certificate of Public Good has been filed for one location; we would be starting over if a new one is needed.

Mr. Ladue spoke to Sue Hudson about how much notice would be needed to re-notify new land-owners...there is a 30 day window.

There was discussion about leaseholders not being landowners and they do not have party status.

All Earth Renewables was given a list and contacted lease holders. At this time, many people stated they had not been notified.

Nina Bacon commented that people close by (Bicknell's on Toll Pines Way) were not notified and that the list of people contacted seemed very random.

Caleb Elder from All Earth Renewables stated that they were notifying as many as possible and they could do more if more addresses were made available. Mr. Russell also stated that they notified all the camps along Flat Rock Rd.

Mo Harvey suggested asking the Superintendent to provide a list of names.

Ms. Bacon asked if the site had been surveyed and Mr. Elder answered yes, both east and west of Flat Rock Rd. He stated they looked at the electrical infrastructure and the sun exposure which was excellent, preferring the west side which has the GMP power pole.

Robert Paul lives on Thompson's Point and asked if/why only 3 sites were looked at. He then suggested the Fire Department across the street (not town owned) or the area in back of Town Hall. He asked about how much money was to be made vs. the amount of town animosity being caused.

Robert Bloch asked about a solar potential study being done and how much worse was the flea market site vs. the other sites. Mr. Elder stated that the area behind Town Hall may work, but 60kW is questionable there and they would like to produce at least that much. He stated that there is no power at the flea market site and they did not have to measure solar capacity, they could tell by looking.

It was noted that the permit that has been filed is a non-binding action.

Nigel Muchlow asked if this was a commercial venture and is the land zoned for commercial. Mr. Russell stated that this was exempt because it would be used for renewable energy and not making money.

Gay Regan noted that she drives by the solar panels everyday to Hinesburg and she finds them offensive and ugly.

It was noted that hundreds of people walk the loop at Thompson's Point and really enjoy the aesthetics. Money and time has been spent planting trees and keeping that area beautiful.

A suggestion was made to plant trees to screen the panels.

It was noted that the lease holders feel powerless and not listened to.

Mr. Paul noted that in Starksboro the panels were placed behind the school and you cannot even tell they are there.

Claudia McCloud asked what happens after 15 years; it was explained that All Earth Renewables simply comes and takes the trackers away.

There was discussion about what happens if the company should go out of business before the 15 years is up.

Mr. Russell explained that there would be verbiage in the contract that would ensure the Town is covered.

Jane Lawless stated that natural beauty, wildlife and lakeshore preservation has always been so important and this would be an inappropriate use of the land.

The Burns property across from the Old Lantern was suggested; it was noted that this could entice more opposition.

Mr. Bloch stated that this is an important part of the town plan and there needs to be plenty of time to discuss, that this seems too rushed.

Mr. Stone said that this was only brought up 3 weeks ago and now has to be decided by December or we will lose money. He stated this was ridiculous and not commonsense.

Somebody wants to make money and earn a tax credit by putting something on our land that should not be there.

Jack Stetson noted that he did not want the pristine beauty interfered with; it will be very disturbing to the land users. He then suggested a parcel off Rt. 7. It was noted that they would need permission from VT Land Trust there.

John Streng said it is clearly not about the money so why rush by the end of the year.

Mr. Russell stated that The Town was not rushing and is going into this with "eyes wide open". The process so far is non-binding, they arranged the site visit for public comment, they are evaluating opportunities and doing proper due diligence.

Mr. Elder noted that the Town has the opportunity to save money over the next 15 years with only \$1K up front. Next year there will not be the same opportunity for zero cost.

Mr. Bloch said this process should have been started back in February. Mr. Russell reiterated that we are not rushing, we can either make a decision or we can't.

Ms. Regan was surprised that the fields are not being conserved since the rules seem very strict for the camps there and asked if they can be conserved. Mr. Russell explained that they would not want to restrict any options in the future.

Roberta Stetson said that she is just now hearing about this and wanted to know how long ago The Board heard about it; the answer was about a month and ½ ago. She then went on to say that no one is saying no to renewable energy, just to the location.

Anne Bijur spoke up to say that she works for All Energy Renewables and is also on the Energy Committee and the Conservation Committee. Said why is renewable energy in the town plan if we are not doing anything about it? Since there is virtually no risk to the Town she felt responsible to bring it up but was hesitant about a possible conflict of interest.

Jessie Price suggested the area by the train station. Tim (?) noted that the panels would not be allowed that close to the tracks.

Mr. Paul mentioned that the Selectboard would not allow a farm stand on Mt. Philo Rd. because of the signs, so allowing this does not make sense.

Virginia Keyser noted that they have gone to a lot of trouble to keep Thompson's Point what it is and this could limit tourism.

Mr. Ladue stated that other locations were discussed by the Board (the park, the school, etc.) and there were valid reasons for ruling them out. He also noted the town evolution has been considered.

Robin Colburn said that the Town Plan statement supports using renewable energy, could that mean allowing homeowners to install panels on their own property or installing wind turbines. Mr. Ladue answered that the plan is not regulatory and can support things in many ways.

Avery Hall, who is a leaseholder, mentioned remembering getting approval for wastewater took 5 years and was ruled by environmental reasoning. He gave the Board credit for determining the proper place and said Thompson's Point should be accepted if it is the right place.

Energy Committee – annual review of activities and goals. *Discussion only:*

The committee stated that they were not ready with a presentation due to being so focused on the solar proposal. They will also be very focused on looking for an alternative proposal and would like to have something prepared before the next meeting. It was noted that an alternative to All Earth Renewables would require a town vote vs. the power purchase agreement.

The Alteris proposal was discussed. With this, there is no lease arrangement and no deadline and grant funding may be available.

Geothermal Heating was discussed as a possible better solution as was Biomass, and they stated wanting to look further into that and looking into what other towns are doing.

Community investment financing was mentioned.

The question was also raised about the Board approving solar panels on homeowner roofs as a way to support renewable energy; Mr. Stone said he would look into this.

West Charlotte Village wastewater study. Action under consideration: *place article on ballot for Town Meeting:*

Suggestion to expand to allow non-municipal connections.

The Village Wastewater Committee wants the Board to decide to put this question to the voters or to have a public discussion.

It was noted that a final report is available on-line.

Pricing was discussed and it was noted that the distance of the parcel from the existing structure would determine cost.

There was discussion about septic capacity for future businesses.

More discussion took place about pursuing this with public discussion vs. town vote noting that a vote means that there will be no discussion and that there would possibly be low attendance for a public discussion.

It was decided to wait for Dean to pick a date to discuss what process should be used.

It was suggested they need to prepare a general plan, get the details, decide what public process and should there be one meeting or two.

Stephen Brooks asked a question about the Knowles Farm clean-up. He noted that she does/did not have the means to do the clean-up herself. He stated that there are 17 tires left and made note of the dates of the CSWD tire round-ups coming up in the near future.

Repair of Welcome to Charlotte Signs. *Discussion only:*

Stephen Brooks was present.

Pictures of the signs were reviewed and it was noted that all of them were in disrepair to some degree.

It was also mentioned that the Grange had originally undertaken "ownership" of the signs but they have voted not to repair them.

Steven brought up a grant he found out about offered by CSWD with an available \$10K. The deadline to apply is October 14th, but the application would not take much time and could be as simple as a letter from The Selectboard.

Steven noted that there are currently 7 signs, that should be expanded to 10 and he estimated a cost of \$660 each.

Recommended verbiage on the signs: "Welcome to Charlotte – Our Town Since 1762 – We Compost and Recycle". It was suggested that the decision makers at CSWD would like that particular content.

Mr. Stone asked if CSWD would pay to remove the current signs, the answer was no. Steven also mentioned that there is a 25% participation fee. He then stated that if this particular job went to bid, he would bid on it and include a 25% kick-back to the town. He also stated that if the verbiage was not acceptable, it could be re-visited after the grant was approved. Spin Richardson mentioned that his son works at CVU and there is a skills program where students work on projects similar to this (they painted Centennial Field). This is done for a small fee. Mr. Russell pointed out that only 2 of the current signs need immediate attention. The Board overall did not approve of the proposed wording. Mr. Delaney suggested the idea be tabled and that they look into the CVU program, possibly revisiting the grant next year. Mr. Owen asked about the contest idea that was brought up at the last meeting.

MOTION by Mr. Stone, seconded by Mr. Owen, to appoint Andrew Swayze to fill the vacancy on the Zoning Board left by Louis Laberge until April 2013.

VOTE: 5 ayes; motion carried.

Selectboard Updates. *Discussion only:*

The Board went on to further discuss the All Earth Renewables proposal and talked more about alternate sites. It was noted that the space in back of Town Hall is big enough.

Mr. Delaney suggested talking to the people at Thompson's Point first, before they all come in to object the proposal.

Mr. Ladue suggested presenting 3 sites to the public and getting feedback on all of them.

It was asked if wetlands can be used for this purpose – it is thought that Hinesburg used wetlands. It was also noted that the area in back may not be a true wetland by definition.

There was discussion about meeting the deadline if they propose, and need to evaluate another site – the 30 day window requirement, but it was noted that could possibly be waived.

Mr. Owen stated that he would like more information on other sites before making a determination about Thompson's Point.

It was agreed that there needed to be another meeting soon, possibly next Monday to discuss a new location. Public comment – out behind Town Hall would be a good place. It was asked can the area just be loaded up with the trackers, but it was stated that you cannot produce more energy than you use.

The line striping was asked about and it was noted that MT. Philo Rd had been striped a little.

Stephen Brooks asked the Board for a status on the letter to UVM about Pease Mountain and the railroad crossing on Ferry Rd.

Adjournment

MOTION by Mr. Stone, seconded by Mr. Owen, to adjourn the meeting.

VOTE: 5 ayes; motion carried.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:25 p.m.

Minutes taken by Sarah Guilmette