

CHARLOTTE CONSERVATION COMMISSION

*Trafton Crandall, Mariana Du Brul, Suzy Hodgson,
Robert Hyams, Gary Pittman, Tiffany Shaw, Holly Sullivan, Howard Verman*

Thompson's Point Solar Tracker Discussion October 18, 2011 Charlotte Library

In Attendance: Trafton, Mariana, Suzy, Bob, Tiffany, Holly, Howard

We welcomed the many visitors attending tonight's meeting to discuss the proposed solar installation at Thompson's point. Select Board members Charles Russell and Winslow LaDue were in attendance as well. In deference to the visitors, we decided to take up Thompson's Point first.

Bob began by commenting on the Town Plan, acknowledging that the Town's planning process didn't anticipate the speed with which renewable energy installations would become an integral component of our landscapes.

We then heard from Suzy Hodgson, Conservation Commission member and chair of the Energy Committee. She described her committee's process and subsequent advocacy for this project. She identified the town plan support for renewable energy. The installation is sized to fulfill the electrical demands of town-owned buildings and optimize net metering potential. Suzy also pointed out that solar panels will generate the most electricity during peak demand - the energy they will displace at peak demand most likely comes from conventional, carbon intensive sources (not the Hydro Quebec power). The Energy Committee evaluated both purchase and lease options before identifying the current plan as the best option for the town.

Next, the discussion turned to the proposed site. The site was identified on a Thompson's Point map. It falls within the Thompson's Point Conservation District, near the intersection of Flat Rock and Thompson's Point Roads. Both roads are identified in the 2008 Town Plan as 'Roads with High Scenic or Conservation Values'. The 2000 Critical Habitat Map identifies the land as Associated Support Habitat, the 2008 Significant Habitat Map identifies the site as Linkage Habitat.

We took comments from the citizens in attendance. All were concerned about the aesthetic impacts on the view. Specific comments spoke to the following points:
- impacts on historical view shed. One resident stated that the view had not changed significantly over the past 100 years, and questioned whether a double standard was in

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practice, as TP homeowners must go to great lengths to maintain 'historical' development and architectural standards.

- wildlife impacts; wildlife sightings were shared, and one resident wondered whether the habitat values were adequately studied.
- sewage treatment system; is the town certain that the proposed installation will not adversely impact the current and future function of the system?
- build out; will more trackers be added to the site in the future?

FACTS

- the energy committee has reviewed the technical, financial, and energy production issues associated with this proposal and has given their endorsement
- town plan supports development of renewable energy sources and siting of renewable energy installations within town
- town has applied for CPG
- proposed site falls within a conservation district (2008 Town Plan)
- Flat Rock and Thompson's Point Roads are identified within the 2008 Town Plan as 'Roads with High Scenic or Conservation Values'
- Proposed uses within the Conservation District shall be referred to the Town Conservation Commission for review and recommendation. (2008 Town Plan)
- The 2000 Critical Habitat Map identifies the land as Associated Support Habitat, the 2008 Significant Habitat Map identifies the site as Linkage Habitat
- Utilities and power generation are exempt from town review process.

FINDINGS

- proposed site does not significantly impact habitat values
- a number of citizens have problems with the visual impacts in terms of aesthetic values and historical values
- Thompson's Point view shed is already impacted by energy production and transmission
 - one wind turbine is highly visible, numerous overhead electric and phone lines are present.
- Winslow did not guarantee that more panels would not be installed in the future, but pointed out that all future expansion would be subjected to the same scrutiny (Certificate of Public Good).
- Winslow stated that there is support of the project from some Thompson's Point residents