



CITY OF GLOUCESTER
PLANNING BOARD
MEETING MINUTES
MONDAY FEBRUARY 1, 2010 AT 7PM
Kyrouz Auditorium, City Hall, 9 Dale Avenue
Jeneth Fahey, Chair

Members Present:

Jeneth Fahey, Chairperson
Mary Black, Vice-Chairperson
Shawn Henry
Marvin Kushner
Rick Noonan

Staff: Gregg Cademartori, Planning Director

I. BUSINESS

A. Call to Order with a Quorum of the Planning Board Subcommittee

The meeting was called to order at 7PM, and it was recognized as an official meeting of the Planning Board as a quorum was present.

II. Discussion of Potential Amendment of Wind Turbine Ordinances

Mr. Cademartori reviewed a memorandum presented to the Board dated February 1, 2010, which outlined a potential means of amending the zoning ordinance to allow the consideration of commercial scaled wind turbines in larger lot, low density residential districts including the R-80, R-40 and R-30. He also discussed the context in which the existing ordinances were drafted, and that at that time stand alone turbines were not contemplated because of state and federal energy regulation. One approach is to use lot and frontage thresholds with additional standards for approval in residential districts. He also provided an assessment that approximately 50 lots could be eligible under the scenario presented, but that far fewer would be likely due to many other factors such as lot geometry, wetlands, and landowner desire. He concluded that this estimate does not account for the possibility of lots being combined to meet potential area requirements.

Ms. Fahey asked how this effort would fit with Green Communities and the potential 40T state zoning amendment proposal.

Mr. Cademartori responded that under the Green Communities initiative the City will not be required to adopt an as-of-right wind ordinance as we have the space and zoning to provide for research and development of renewable technologies. However, being a community which enables wind energy projects will most likely help in grant applications which will surely measure communities' commitment to alternative energy. As far as 40T is concerned he believes it is beneficial for the city to enact an ordinance that applicants would prefer over any state comprehensive approach, so the city can maintain control of siting.

Ms. Black if there was a general number out there of the size of the footprint of such projects.

Mr. Cademartori indicated that there is a certain footprint for the foundation and mounting and typically an access road for installation and service. He said he would provide estimates from the Varian application.

Mr. Noonan asked about the rationale for the 15 acre lot area threshold.

Mr. Cademartori indicated that the state model includes a three times (3x) the height setback to residential which pretty much ends the discussion of siting, as the area of a circle three times the height of most turbines would be on the order of 30 acres or more. The suggested 500 foot radius results in 18 acres which would require most of the setback on the applicant's property rather than an abutter's if the threshold was set at 15 acres. A one times (1x) the height approach could be taken which would also relate the setback to the specifics of a proposal.

Mr. Noonan said that not all permits would be approved, but he thinks it would be a better approach to encourage more applications for consideration.

Mr. Cademartori said he can easily look at the addition potential created by a 12.5 acre or 10 acre threshold.

Michele Harrison asked if she could address the subcommittee and was recognized by the chair. Ms. Harrison indicated that she represents Stop N Shop, which recently appealed to the Zoning Board to allow the consideration of a commercial wind turbine at their East Gloucester location. Stop N Shop has a large energy demand and has made a corporate commitment to reduce their energy use through efficiency and renewable energy by 20% by 2015. Ms. Harrison believes the Extensive Business (EB) district should be considered for such applications and provided the Board with language that would accommodate this use in the EB district. Stop N Shop would like to have its East Gloucester site be a model.

Mr. Cademartori asked if Ms. Harrison knew off hand if the Stop N Shop proposed location would potentially satisfy a one times (1x) the height of a turbine to residential use standard should one be enacted.

Ms. Harrison believed the turbines they were considering, which would supply nearly 100% of their energy demand, would satisfy that setback. Additionally, a proposed 10 acre lot size would limit the consideration to only four EB districts including Gloucester Crossing and the Demoulas Concord Street site and one on Essex Avenue. Ms. Harrison believes these retail sites should also be eligible. Ms. Harrison noted that during the Gloucester Crossing hearing the desire for energy efficiency was voiced, however wind turbines could not even be considered as they are not currently allowed in the EB.

Mr. Noonan indicated that he attended the Zoning Board hearing on the Stop N Shop variance request and feels that advancing the EB as a consideration may not be much of a help as members of the public voiced strong opposition and would be sure to follow both any proposed zoning amendment to enable consideration, and the special permit itself. He is not sure whether this is a position the full Board would want to take, and is not optimistic that it would survive the rezoning process.

Ms. Black expressed the need to consider all of this information and felt that the approach of considering rural areas needs a little further consideration, but that she is not so sure about the East Gloucester site or the EB districts.

Mr. Cademartori indicated that during the initial discussions in the development of the ordinance he advocated for a wind overlay to consider areas with the best wind resources and the lowest residential density. However discussions coincided with the Varian proposal, so the BP district was sure to be included. The EB shares the same concern as the MI district which has had one pre-application that tells a great story of why it would make sense for the company, but it is a tough location to site a wind turbine. He would much prefer we identify appropriate city land for this use and allow such companies to lease land for turbine installations. The proposed language that he circulated would accommodate this potential along with municipal wind projects.

Ms. Fahey suggested that the additional analysis of 10 and 12.5 acres be provided and the discussion continued to the Planning Board meeting of Thursday February 4th.

Mr. McCarl motioned to adjourn at 9pm.

Second: Mr. Noonan

All in favor (4-0) Mr. Henry left at 8:30pm.