

**BARRE TOWN PLANNING COMMISSION  
MINUTES FOR SPECIAL MEETING NOVEMBER 1, 2022**

Some members of the Barre Town Planning Commission had a joint meeting with the Selectboard on **November 1, 2022**, at the Municipal Building, 149 Websterville Road, Websterville, VT.

**PC MEMBERS**

In person: Cedric Sanborn, Mike Gilbar, Craig Chase, Terry Reil, and Chris Violette  
Absent: George Clain

**SELECTBOARD**

Paul White, Norma Malone, Justin Bolduc, Bob Nelson, and W. John “Jack” Mitchell.

**STAFF PRESENT**

Chris Violette (Planning & Zoning) and Carl Rogers (Town Manager)

**OTHERS PRESENT:**

Joan McMahan, Brandon Campo, Shannon Romeo, Megan LeCours, Martin Romeo, Brad Romeo, Lila Humphrres-LePage, Cam Cahill, Dave Thurber, Pam Thurber, Brent Tewksbury, Jim Merriam, Diana Wood, Troy McBride, Times Argus Reporter Eric Blaisdell. Those present virtually: Deb Lefebvre, Stephen Conti, Howard Cook, Becky Post, 476-7171, 479-5233, and 279-6899.

Excerpt from the Selectboard meeting taken by Jennifer Bushway, Assistant Town Clerk

**A. SCHOOL ROAD SOLAR FARM:**

Background: Notice of a special Planning Commission meeting was published in the newspaper. Norwich Solar was the developer of the two Washington County Mental Health solar projects. Norwich Solar is looking at inquiring a 50-acre parcel off along School Road. This project would be a 2,100-kW array. The electricity generated would be sold to the State of Vermont.

Those present from Norwich Solar: CEO Jim Merriam, Community Outreach Director Diana Wood, and Project Manager Troy McBride. Norwich Solar is looking at assessing a 50-acre parcel along School Road to continue agricultural uses and include solar electric generation. The solar array would have a footprint of approximately 12-15 acres. They are working with Vermont farmers and educational institutions to create a dual land use plan for growing crops as well as generating solar-sourced electricity. Norwich Solar CEO Jim Merriam stated they are reaching out to share this information and to receive public input, answer questions, and address concerns.

Many residents of the neighborhood were present. Those present voiced concerns around noise, wildlife, long-term health effects, visibility of panels, future expansion, decommissioning, and decrease in property value. Numerous residents expressed their concerns around the land being used for a community garden, stating they are not in favor of this idea. Mr. Merriam noted this. Conversation continued as Mr. Merriam and owners of the LePage Farm discussed potential opportunities of working together for future use of the land.

Planning and Zoning Administrator Chris Violette stated the Public Utility Commission of the State of Vermont ultimately will make the decision around this project, however, there is a process. Although the Town does not have direct authority, they do have a voice in the decision process. Norwich Solar will file a 45-day notice that the Selectboard and Planning Commission will review. Mr. Violette noted the Town has an Energy Plan and a Town Plan. These plans have been approved by the Public Utility Commission and will be reviewed. Additionally, the Planning Commission and Selectboard will have a chance to submit comments to the developer once the project has been reviewed. The abutters will also have a chance to provide input.

Chair White thanked everyone for coming out to voice their opinions.

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Cedric Sanborn, Chair

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Mike Gilbar

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George Clain

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Byron Atwood

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Chris Violette

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Craig Chase

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Terry Reil