

Town of North Smithfield Planning Board
Kendall Dean School, 83 Green Street
Thursday, December 6, 2012, 7:00 PM

The Chair called the meeting to order at 7:05 pm.

1. Roll Call

Present: Chair Dr. Lucien Benoit, Dean Naylor, Gene Simone, Art Bassett, Mali Jones, Gene Currie.
Also present was Town Planner Bob Ericson.

2. Approval of Minutes: November 15, 2012

These minutes were not received in time for distribution to the Planning Board and therefore will be discussed at the next scheduled Planning Board meeting.

3. Annual Organization: Election of officers and adoption of rules of procedure

Per the North Smithfield Planning Board Rules of Procedure, Mr. Ericson suggested a change to the Annual Organizational Meeting section, namely that the annual election of Planning Board officers be changed to the first regular Planning Board meeting following the annual Town Council appointment of at least one member. This year the second alternate will not be determined by the Town Council until after the meeting on January 22, 2013. The alternates cannot vote anyway, so there is no reason to put the election of officers off until a future meeting.

Mr. Bassett made a motion to accept the new process for electing new officers. Mr. Simone seconded the motion with all in favor.

Mr. Ericson opened up the nomination process to the Board.

Chair:

Ms. Jones nominated Mr. Naylor as Chair. Mr. Simone nominated Dr. Benoit as Chair. Mr. Ericson took a roll call vote on the nomination of Mr. Naylor. Planning Board vote was as follows: YES: Mr. Naylor, Ms. Jones. NO: Mr. Simone, Mr. Bassett, and Dr. Benoit. Mr. Ericson took a roll call vote on the nomination of Dr. Benoit. Planning Board vote was as follows: YES: Mr. Simone, Mr. Bassett, and Dr. Benoit. NO: Mr. Naylor, Ms. Jones. Dr. Benoit was voted in as Chair of the Planning Board, with a vote of 3-2. He then took over as Chair for the remainder of the meeting.

Vice Chair:

Ms. Jones nominated Dean Naylor as Vice Chair. The Chair took a roll call vote on the nomination of Mr. Naylor. Planning Board vote was as follows: YES: Ms. Jones, Mr. Simone, Mr. Naylor, Dr. Benoit, Mr. Bassett. Mr. Naylor was voted in as Vice Chair of the Planning Board, with a vote of 5-0.

Secretary:

Dr. Benoit nominated Mr. Simone as Secretary. Planning Board vote was as follows: YES: Ms. Jones, Mr. Naylor, Dr. Benoit, Mr. Bassett. Mr. Simone abstained from the voting. Mr. Simone was voted in as Secretary of the Planning Board, with a vote of 4-0.

Approved 12/6/2012

Ms. Jones made a statement regarding her appointment to the Planning Board. In mid-November, Ms. Jones notified the Board that because of family and work commitments, she would not be seeking reappointment to the Planning Board. A short time before the Town Council meeting on December 3, 2012, Ms. Jones no longer felt her commitments would preclude her from being active on the Planning Board and notified several members of the Town Council and requested to be reappointed to the Planning Board. On Monday, December 3, 2012, Ms. Jones was reappointed to the Planning Board as a full member.

Mr. Bassett left the Planning Board meeting at 7:20.

4. Interstate Reliability Project: Presentation by National Grid regarding the next phase of electrical transmission upgrades, which run from Connecticut through Burrillville and North Smithfield. Discussion, vote, or other action regarding an advisory opinion to the RI Energy Facilities Siting Board.

The first presentation was by Mr. Peter Lacouture from the law firm Robinson & Cole LLP. The Interstate Reliability Project is a three-state National Grid project in Massachusetts, Rhode Island and Connecticut. NG will construct 75 miles of new 345 KV transmission lines. The Rhode Island component is 22 miles in North Smithfield and 9 miles in Burrillville.

Appearing before the Planning Board is a part of Energy Facilities Siting Board process. National Grid requests that an advisory opinion as to consistency with the North Smithfield Comprehensive Plan be submitted by April 10, 2013. They also seek relief from the North Smithfield Zoning Board for the height of the new transmission towers and from the Town Council from the noise ordinance regarding construction work hours.

Next up was David Barron, Project Manager for the New England East West Reliability Project. The Interstate Reliability Project is one project within that. The benefits for North Smithfield include:

- Two new 346 kV transmission connections to serve RI
- Resolving projected thermal overloads across southern New England, including central and southern MA
- Providing additional transfer capability from west to east, from east to west and into Connecticut
- Strengthening transmission system overall, which may assist efficient delivery from new generation, including renewables
- Facilitating retirement of older, inefficient generation which may otherwise be needed from time to time to backstop the region on an out-of-merit basis

Several approvals are required for the project in North Smithfield:

- Dimensional variance for transmission structure height: 60-140 feet
- Exemption from Town Council under Noise Ordinance for construction work hours:
 - 7:00 am to 7:00 pm, seven days a week
 - Normal hours: 7:00 – 7:00 pm (M-F)
7:00 – 5:00 pm (Sat)
- Non-standard hours for activities that are not interruptible or as required by RIDOT

The existing ROW varies from approximately 300 feet to 600 feet wide. The plan is to add lines alongside existing towers in existing right-of-ways. This will require clearing of trees to create space for the new

power lines. In some cases the trees will be cleared to the edge of the ROW leaving no buffer zone. A distance of 65 feet is required from residential units.

Mr. Currie asked if the project will affect the buffer zone between power lines and the residents. Mr. Barron responded yes, and in some cases the buffer zone will disappear and homes will be exposed. Mr. Ericson asked if the Board can receive maps of the areas where the buffer zones will disappear. Mr. Barron indicated that they can be created. Residents with privately owned forests may not notice changes to the buffer.

Regarding the effects on wetlands, Mr. Barron stated that during construction there will be full-time environmental monitors to make sure they are adhering to permit conditions. National Grid has very thorough guidance policies.

David Perry, retired NG employee, now in Stakeholder Relations (responsible for stakeholder and abutter outreach) spoke to the Board concerning the notification to residents. Outreach for this project started in 2007 and the information has been presented from Millbury, MA into RI. Mr. Perry has spoken to many residents door-to-door, dropped off information, and held informational meetings.

James Durand, consultant from AECOM Technology, presented information regarding the impacts from this project on wetlands in North Smithfield. National Grid is working closely with The Army Corp of Engineers (COE) and DEM monitoring the impacts on wetlands. He explained that there are three different types of effects on wetlands:

- 1) permanent impact (permanent structures, improvements in access roads, culverts)
- 2) temporary impact (mitigated using swamp mats, bridges)
- 3) Secondary (taking down trees in wetlands, converting from forested wetlands to scrub wetlands)

Mitigation is required for all three types of impacts. There are 164 acres of land preservation in RI with 62-65 acres of that in NS.

Dr. Benoit asked about maintenance of the National Grid right-of-way. Once clearing is done, a Vegetation Management Plan will be applied to the r-o-w, and it includes chemical, biological and mechanical methods. Herbicide application follows the Vegetation Management Plan and is heavily regulated by DEM and EPA,

Mr. Naylor asked about whether there will be changes in the topography and if blasting will be done. Topography changes may occur where there are steep inclines or where a level surface is needed.

There is a possibility for blasting, but it will be the last approach. National Grid will use air hammers and rock coring first. If blasting is needed, all necessary approvals will be sought.

Page 5-16 of the Interstate Reliability Project Environmental Report document describes the environmental impact to the residents. There are 319 homes within 500 feet of the National Grid structures in MA and RI. In response to a question about the magnetic field surrounding the power lines, Mr. Barron spoke about reasons for the variability in the magnetic fields, included design of parallel lines. Appendix J of the document summarizes the health effects of radiation.

Mr. Simone asked about the effect of the increased runoff from deforestation. Mr. Durand indicated that erosion controls have been identified and the project will be held in accordance to the North Smithfield Soil and Erosion Control Ordinance. The data is being made available to the DEM and to the zoning official Mr. Robert Benoit.

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Mr. Dave Campilli, Electrical Engineer for National Grid spoke about the system losses along the power line: the higher the voltage, the lower the current needed to move the electricity through the line. System losses turn electricity into heat and the heat radiates out into the environment. This project is utilizing the best technology available for minimizing losses. The increase in number of lines carrying power decreases the amount of electricity travelling through each line minimizing losses also.

National Grid will deliver a list of abutters as well as maps indicating where buffer zones will be removed between the ROW and residence. The Planning Board has until April 10, 2013 to submit their recommendations for the Interstate Reliability Project.

Mr Naylor made a motion to move agenda item #7 Barrington chicken hen ordinance for the next discussion. Ms. Jones seconded the motion with all in favor.

5. Barrington chicken hen ordinance: Discussion, vote or other action on recommendations to the Town Council on an ordinance allowing up to six properly housed chicken hens on residential lots.

Mr. David Ball appeared before the Planning Board to explain his attempt to get permission to have chickens on his property at 18 Annette Avenue in North Smithfield. He began the process of getting permits to have chickens in 2010 and was told it would cost him over \$1000 to be allowed to have chickens. He would like to know if the rules can be changed to allow a less expensive means of having chickens. Mr. Ericson presented the Barrington chicken hen ordinance with modifications made for North Smithfield. After much discussion, the Board determined that a new ordinance will be submitted to the Town Council and suggested that the Use tables be changed to include a separate line for the ownership of chickens. The Board agreed that 12 chickens will be the maximum allowed. Mr. Ericson noted that in subdivisions with restrictive covenants, those covenants will prevail.

6. Land Development & Subdivision Regulations: Continuing review of proposed revisions to Articles 1, 2, 4, 5, 9 and appendices. Planning Board adoption of revisions can take place only after an advertised public hearing tentatively planned for the first quarter of 2013.

The Board discussed Section 17 of the Zoning Ordinance regarding Development Plan Review. After discussion, the Board decided that when a plan comes to the Planning Department, the Technical Review Committee (TRC) will review the impact of the project. The Planning Board will consider the TRC review and determine if it needs to consider it or delegate approval to the TRC. Board members suggested that the TRC normally would be sufficient where a commercial or industrial development stays within an existing footprint or is under 5000 square feet. Mr. Ericson will write this up.

6. Planning Board work program priorities: Discussion of Planning Board priorities for the next two years, including Land Development and Subdivision Regulations, Zoning Ordinance recodification, and 10-year Comp Plan.

The priority list submitted by Mr. Ericson is as follows:

- 1) Updated LD&SR
- 2) Zoning amendments from the Comprehensive Plan list
- 3) Republish the changes to the Zoning Ordinance
- 4) 2013 10-year Comprehensive Plan

8. Planning update: Review of current events, meetings schedule.

Approved 12/6/2012

Mr. Ericson indicated that Walgreens Pharmacy, planning to move next to Stop and Shop, may possibly come in on December 20 for a pre-application meeting.

A construction recycling proposal for 20 Providence Pike (large steel warehouse) came to the Planning Department and may come before the Planning Board for a consultation or pre-application.

Navigant Bank is in no hurry to start development but may be back with a Preliminary Plan this winter.

Mr. Simone made a motion to adjourn at 9:40 pm. Mr. Currie seconded the motion, with all in favor.