

TOWN OF NORTHUMBERLAND
PLANNING BOARD Minutes
Weds., Jan. 3, 2018
Groveton PD/Ambulance Bldg. - Meeting Room
10 Station Square
Groveton, NH
7:00 P.M.

Board members present: Al Rossetto, Addy Hall, Jeffrey St. Cyr, Jim Weagle
Others present: Michael Phillips, Elaine Gray, Rebecca St. Cyr - Recorder

1. MINUTES of December 6, 2017 Meeting

Motion to approve the December 6, 2017 minutes by: A. Rossetto
2nd by: A. Hall, All in Favor 3-0

2. Discussion of Warrant Article for Solar Exemption – Michael Phillips

M. Phillips heard about this approx. 2 years, recently a resident on Thompson Rd asked about it as a possibility. He looked in to it a little and appreciates what E. Gray pulled together. Those of us that have electricity pay a monthly bill, but we don't pay property tax for it. When someone invests in solar, because they are off grid, there are a lot of costs – to put it in, buy a generator and run the generator. It seems excessive, so when there is an option to give an exemption – that's why he is bringing this to the Planning Board to see if there is support for it and what's the right amount. For him, it would be \$10,000 - \$20,000. Phillips is in favor of solar and feels it's a good thing. He would apply to all not just residential. He can see the Select Board putting this warrant forward, but if the Planning Board supports, that could be noted also.

A. Rossetto said he would benefit from an exemption, he has solar hot water. His array is appraised at approx. \$1,300. It saves him approx. \$250.00 per year in propane. At the current tax rate, the exemption would save him approx. \$50.00/year. He believes a solar makes money. Is it a good public policy to take from everyone and give to some that can afford to have renewable energy on their land from which they make money? It cost him approx. \$6,000 - \$7,000 to put it in. His concern is does every additional person in town have to pay additional taxes because I made that decision.

M. Phillips feels the tax system is unfair and unjust. When someone has a \$1,000 situation or a \$5,000 situation, their income could be the same. An off-grid system at this cost, it would be a lot more expensive to put electric poles (access) in. It's a government policy that he feels is good. He sees it as something that can help the inequities.

A. Hall doesn't feel he should have to pay for systems that have been put in through grants such as a commercial system. With the net metering, they get to sell the power to the company for the same price that's paid to get it. A. Rossetto said he put his system in because he thought it would reduce his footprint. The question is, is the Town eligible for a reduction. The whole system isn't taxed, just a portion of it is. He's not sure what the \$ impact is.

E. Gray had the tax card for property on Thompson Rd. The solar arrays are assessed at \$16,300, and they have 45 units. Other systems have been quoted at \$40,000 - \$50,000 (purchase price). The Board further discussed.

M. Phillips is frustrated by the inequities in the tax system. The State gave this option and he feels it has merit.

A. Rossetto talked with a resident that has contracted with a company to put solar on his property. He was required to have an electric bill more than \$140.00 per month; he would pay \$120.00 for the solar array for 20-years, its life is estimated at 30 years. The last 10 years he would make out with it.

\$10,000 of the assessed value sounds like $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{3}$ of the solar arrays being put up locally. Rossetto further discussed. Are we helping the bottom or top of the spectrum? M. Phillips said we would probably be helping those that are paying more than the average tax.

If he spent \$50,000 and received a \$10,000 tax break, it seems like a positive thing to do. If capped at \$10,000, is that incentive enough to be a worthwhile goal for some. Discussed a scenario, cost, exemption, earnings off the system and savings, which could be a 12-15 year pay back. A. Hall understands that the whole system isn't being paid for; there are rebates to the resident, and the tax payers are paying a portion. The owner would be paying the property taxes on it. A. Hall said most of those that have it are businesses.

A. Rossetto said we would like to move it down to those that are struggling to pay their electric bill. M. Phillips commented that he knows families that are running generators on cloudy days, struggling to pay their taxes, not saving money due to additional cost, etc. He feels it's a good thing. A. Rossetto asked if it could be written for off the grid residences and businesses only. If not connected to the grid, he might be more in favor of the exemption and further discussed.

E. Gray said that Dummer has residential only, she can check to see if it's legal. She said we have a property on Brook Rd. that's residential, but there is a business on the property also. They have 60 units, it might be considered residential, since they live there.

J. Weagle would like to see it come in as a petitioned warrant article from the residents. That keeps the Boards out of it. M. Phillips is in favor of it and will discuss with the Select Board. With a petitioned warrant article, E. Gray stated they may request the full exemption. There are quite a few residential systems in Town currently. A. Rossetto read a sample warrant article. E. Gray said that just solar can be written on the warrant article, we don't need to include wood, heat & wind.

Discussion ensued regarding warrant articles for renewable energy systems – including, wood heat, solar, wind. If intended for the immediate site – A. Hall & J. Weagle were not in favor – A. Rossetto would be in favor if for immediate site only. If part of it's being exported, they would not qualify.

Motion to recommend that the Board of Selectmen consider a warrant article relative to the solar exemption by: A. Rossetto

2nd by: A. Hall – 2 in Favor – 2 Against, Alternate – 1 in Favor

E. Gray feels there may be a petitioned article and she would rather have done by the Select Board with a capped amount. They should all be separate warrant articles – solar, wood, wind. J. Weagle likes a petitioned warrant article because the people that submit it need to come and support it. If the Selectmen put it in, it's just the Board talking about it. The petitioned article could cost the Town money. J. Weagle said that any exemptions right now will hurt the Town.

Discussed the other exemptions, A. Hall commented it shouldn't be up to the tax payers to subsidize their systems.

3. Any Other Business to Come Before the Board

J. Weagle read a notice from PSNH regarding the closure of some electrical facilities. J. Weagle said anything put into Groveton should be taxed, require building permits, be required to go through the Planning and Zoning Boards. But because they are in their own right-of-way, they go by the Public Utilities Commission.

Sansoucy will be assessing this year – they are exempt from building permits.

Motion to adjourn by: A. Rossetto
2nd by: A. Hall, All in Favor 3-0

Meeting adjourned at 7:53 pm.