

Groton Planning Board
Special Work Session January 8, 2015
Minutes

Present: Chairman Slim Spafford, Deb Johnson, Celine Richer, Russ Carruth, Ray Blake, Jenny Burnett, and Select Board Liaison Bob Ferriere

Absent: Sherry Nelson and Dave LaBar

Work session began at 7:10 PM.

Slim stated that at the Planning Board's request, the Select Board can put a warrant article on the Town Report to put forward designation of Province Rd. as a Scenic Road. Discussion ensued; Russ asked as to the implications of and motivations for designation. Slim explained that the implications are rather limited, in that logging and the ability of the Town to perform road maintenance to include hazard tree removal is not affected. Designation would prohibit the destruction of cultural resources, like stone walls. Deb added that Province Rd. is the last section of beautiful and historically significant road in Groton. Slim moved, Deb seconded that we request the warrant article, and all were in favor except Russ and Bob who abstained.

Next we discussed the proposed ordinance regulating development of future wind farms, a draft of which had been emailed before the meeting to members of the Board. Deb provided some history of the creation of the proposed ordinance. In an attempt to capture the consensus of what many townspeople were concerned about with regard to further wind farm development, the Watsons and a few others borrowed language from other towns to draft an ordinance.

Deb and Mr. Watson described the effect of the potential ordinance as similar to site plan review, not meant to prohibit wind development outright, rather to attempt to regulate it. The SEC's ruling, soon to go into effect, states that a town's preference in these matters will be given more weight than in the past if that preference is expressed through an ordinance or within the town's Master Plan. They went on to explain that the ordinance does not apply to small "backyard" wind energy generators producing less than 100 KW of electricity.

Bob wanted to know what the ordinance would do for the Town. Deb answered that it was a way to address some of the land use concerns Town residents had expressed using appropriate and lawful action. She feels that the RBOs (Rights-Based Ordinances) recently passed by Danbury and Hebron were an invitation to litigation.

Slim stated that regulations state that a vote must take place within 10 calendar days of public posting of the hearing, which was to go up the following day. There was concern expressed by Jenny regarding the short turn-around to understand the implications of the proposed ordinance. Celine moved and Slim seconded that we advance the proposed ordinance to public hearing, and all voted in favor except Jenny, who was opposed. The Board agreed to make comments to Deb Johnson before the hearing.

Submitted by Jenny Burnett