

Worthington Planning Board Public Hearing/ Meeting November 20, 2025

Special Permit submitted by BWC Wades Stream, LCC / BlueWave Solar for a Large Scale Ground Mounted Solar Photovoltaic Installation at 190 Ridge Road.

The proposed project involves the installation of approximately 7,462 ground mounted solar photovoltaic panels and associated equipment to produce 3.95-megawatts (MW) direct current (DC). The project area is approximately 27.45 acres in what is currently an open field.

In Attendance:

Bart Niswonger
Kate Bavelock
Kathy Ford
Nestor Matthews
Anna Maunz
Robin Stein, Town Counsel

Town Hall Sign in sheet attached

Blue Wave:

Aaron Simms
Tad
Olivia
Drew

Virtual: Look at notes

Beth Greenbaum
Paul Sena
Suzanne Kulik
Jay dreschnack

Intro : Charlie Rose intro to meeting- quick overview of sound system workings.

Bart Niswonger: Introduction:

Special Permit submitted by BWC Wades Stream, LCC / BlueWave Solar for a Large Scale Ground Mounted Solar Photovoltaic Installation at 190 Ridge Road.
Viewing this as an opportunity to listen to the project.

Blue Wave's presentation:

Presentation by Aaron Simms. Open to suggestions and edits on the project.
Been in MA for 15 years: A community solar development company. Hundreds of megawatts of solar in the state.

In 2022 Blue Wave transitioned to owner owned Agrivoltaics projects.

Agrivoltaics Overview: Combination of Solar and Farming.

BESS: Battery Energy Storage System- Aaron goes over battery system asserts that it meets the states requirements for safety regulations.

Example projects: in Palmer, MA and Dighton, MA

This Solar project will take up to 25 - 27 acres of land.

Olivia: Permitting consultant for Blue Wave: Goes over project specifics

Electrical components will be underground - until place of connection

Storm water peak conditions are better than existing; use standards for MA

- Culverts will be replaced and added

- Post construction conditions will be improved from the current conditions

Project Schedule:

Construction Start: 2027. (6-9 mos Construction Period)

Commercial Operation: 2028

Kate Bavelock requests for Blue Wave to show the portion of the map that is in the water protection district:

Shows Map: Part shaded in Green is in the Water Protection District.

Map just made available today.

IWPA: Internal Well Protection Area

Town Counsel's opinion on the project: Robin Stein

MA General Law Chapter 40A 9th paragraph

Solar in MA has heightened special protection under MA law

Protection of solar is allowable per site plan: non-discretionary

Not the same as evaluating other special permits

The Board cannot deny

Site Plan Review: Includes reviewing the project not determining whether or not the project can take place.

Only the portions that are in the district are part of the Site Plan Review process.

Bart questions denying a Site Plan Review process- unless there is an "intricable reason"

Town Counsel responds: absent serious public health safety, it would be very difficult to defend

No court has upheld a denial in the state of MA

Public Comments:

- **John Sullivan:** Fire District 35 years:

- Questions: Whose going to maintain the project: Corporate structure.
 - is there liability if there's a problem
 - will they follow safe installation
- Question about runoff due to batteries
 - property behind ridge road is John Sullivan's
 - can't afford to have any issue
 - What kind of foreign LLC is going to take care of this.

- Aaron Simms Responds:

LLC: Both entities that Blue Wave owns. Two names, because of the two projects in town.

Blue Wave is responsible for maintaining the array. They will be monitored remotely.

Batteries are highly regulated- when they get to the building permit they will have more stats on the exact batteries that they will be using. Once obtained, they will supply that info to the planning board.

Maintenance: land owners are currently haying the site, and they will be in charge of maintenance.

- Bart asks who will keep the fence clear:

- The Farmer's job to keep clear.

How does lease carry over to a future owner:

Blue Wave has leased the land from a landowner - if they stop farming - Blue Wave has the obligation to find a new farmer for the property.

SMART: Solar Mass Renewable Targets: all systems are incentivized to recoup costs of the program

If they fall out of compliance: Blue Wave would lose their financial incentive. They have financial incentive for a farmer to continue farming their land.

Runoff: From a battery safety perspective there's a lot of pieces of information- wouldn't use water to extinguish a battery of that type.

Designed as standard land development - decrease in water runoff volume - it will not increase any off site discharges.

Helen Pollard Presentation: Abutter of property will sue.

Section 5.5

Site Plan Review

Section 9.2.4: Prohibited Usage

Questions about hazardous materials

Site Plan Review is incomplete- due to Conservation Commission

The Plan was missing engineering data

Special Permit may only be granted after completion.

Battery storage system: creates and undue stress on the volunteer fire department.

Sites Case Law: that the town must deny all applications. "It is our honorable responsibility to outright deny."

If the Planning Board accepts instead of denies, they are in conflict under chapter 40 A

What Blue Wave is missing: (Long list see Helen's slides)

Helen states that the Planning Board must deny the application: due to the application being incomplete.

Question of the clock re-starting.

Any new bylaw changes would apply the new applications.

She asserts that continuation will take us to land court.

Head of Fire Department has the ability to prohibit: Has independent powers.

Worthington has no paid mutual aid for BESS Fires.

45 minutes away from State aid: Small volunteer Fire Department.

Question of how do they respond to a Lithium Fire.

Bart requests Helen to send us her slides.

Planning Board talks about consultants we have hired and engineers we have hired.

Kevin O'Connor: Agrees with Helen

Question: Where are we in our ability to fight any aspect of this project?

What is preventing the owner from simply moving the fence outside of the wetlands.

Bart Responds: We are at the beginning of this process and in the information gathering phase.

Conservation Commission deemed that the wetlands protection act applies

No relation between the Conservation Commission and Planning Board's time lines for the application process.

Town counsel responds that our process is not paused

Steve Stromm:

Asks questions of Town Counsel: When was Chapter 40A Section 3 initiated?

Response:

- Not all adapted at the same time.
- Solar Provisions came in 1985
- They weren't litigated a lot until recently

Mike Dondiego: Worthington Fire Chief

I support solar installation in principal but have a number of questions

MA Comprehensive Fire Code:

Asks about Battery Type

Charging/ discharging system, containment, any fire suppression on site, changeout: are batteries on a maintenance plan, taking care of battery materials that need to be disposed of.

Questions about transmission voltages in connection to grid; how will these be connected?

Concerned about storms and storm damage: who is responsible for this?

Volunteer fire department is usually the first ones on site.

Vehicle access- a lot heavier than normal vehicles- concerned about roadway and access. Turn around points?

Its difficult to get water supply in the hills: Tanker shuttles

Local water supply: on site option should be in consideration: Fire pond on the property?

Containment on the battery system- nature of the battery itself.

Other energy storage capacities available: such as high speed fly wheel

Need a complete plan to understand what is actually happening here.

- Bart Responds: Requesting that Blue Wave comes up with a rough outline about the battery implications.

Power lines/ Voltage on wires

- Blue Wave:Aaron: Voltage is 23KV - utility is responsible for maintaining those lines.

Bart questions: Pole upgrades from the rotary to that site.

Blue Wave: Does not currently know the route and will not know until farther along in the process

Blue Wave: Open to revising road conditions for fire safety: 35-40' wheel base 65,000 lbs.

Special container for lithium batteries.

Aaron says batteries are highly regulated - industry has turned over so much recently they genuinely don't know what the battery will be.

Matt Lagoy: "Most impacted by this proposal"

Set back requirements: Fence needs to be 50' set back, via code: currently at the property line

Fire perspective: He's the guy who meets you at the gate when the system burns. When a battery 'goes off', it's all about containment.

Not dumping water on the batteries: just trying to make sure the fire doesn't spread

Down stream: evacuation

Lithium Iron base

From online Chat: **Steven Libski**

How does the town of Worthington benefit from Blue Wave?

Blue Wave :Pilot Program: Payment instead of Taxes

Selectboard is looking into these arrangements.

Question: Will Blue Wave repair any damage done to local public roads?

Possibility of Funding an account for roadway maintenance.

Aaron reads response on public response.

on-going after commissioning: fairly minimal with a van

James Downey:

Question about Consultants:

Bart responds: Beth is our consultant not the engineer.

Jim Requests up to 125% of the cost of decommissioning

Questions about Engineer:

Bart responds: Planning board is working on hiring an engineer/

Jim asserts that we have the right to protect ourselves as a town and obtain an outside consultant that has no affiliation with Blue Wave.

Brian Schick: Concerned about aesthetics. Worthington is a very attractive small New England town. Thinks Solar farms are very ugly. "Landscape Pollution."

Can't believe that the people of Worthington want this as "The Center of Town."

If this becomes reality: What is going to be done to visually mitigate?

Nestor Mathews: We cannot work against MA law. Aesthetic concerns are important to the town and to planning board. How as a town do we determine ways to mitigate what this ends up visually looking like?

Emily Larabee:

Worked at National Renewable Energy never thought that she would be going up against Solar Project.

Concerning points in proposal:

How many installations

Noise from facility: no audible analysis.

Failure to provide evidence in many locations
Underground distribution line
Blue Wave proposes no negative economic impacts on adjoining properties.
Project is in line with agricultural aesthetics of town.

Questions:

Blue Wave was created in 2010 - but have changed their names 7 times - all LLC, one public benefit corporation. All leads back to a Canadian enterprise firm.

Why are they creating an LLC - other than protection?

Liability Insurance

Worried that neighboring homeowners will not be able to obtain home insurance.

Environmental disaster possibilities and probabilities.

How can board make a determinant of safety and health without these concerns being addressed. Feels like a threat to public safety.

Our town cannot make a determination on this without hiring independent engineers and lawyers.

Home owners are made in the proposal as responsible for the maintenance of this site.

BESS has been responsible for a lot of environmental disasters.

In case of an environmental disaster - the town could sue the landowner.

Bart Responds:

We are in the process of hiring an independent engineer

Need more information on batteries, Insurance

Blue Wave responds: Standard is to have a separated entity: LLC to obtain funding

Annie Lagoy:

Health, Safety, Welfare of the town:

Why is the Board of Health not a part of this? Will the town be hearing from the Board of Health.

Her current well, neighbor below us has rights to that well. The water table is high and the wells are not deep so possible contamination throughout the neighborhood.

The View Shed: Looking from her property: It is not possible to mitigate that.

What happens to properties that have been devalued completely:

They are going to sue.

They have quoted to them that their property decrease of 1.5%

They need to know what 27 acres of a solar field will sound like - she feels like they are being disingenuous.
They said the battery is mandated by the state - or is it just about financial incentives. Are the batteries something we have to allow/ separate from the solar panels?
How do they define active farming?
Seriously wants the Planning Board to come to her property to look at the view shed.
If Sena's aren't able to continue farming they would need to find someone to farm the land.

Gabrielle Unger:

Finds it troubling that Town Counsel started the meeting by saying there is nothing that we can do.

Suggests that Blue Wave really considers that this will not be a pleasant process.

I think you can have more success doing projects in other town other than Worthington.

Dick Wagner

Who is hiring the consultant? and who is paying for the consultant?

-The Planning Board chooses and hires the consultant.

-Blue Wave writes the planning board a check for the amount that the consultant has quoted. The check goes to the town and the Planning board then pays the consultant out of those funds.

Where is the LLC incorporated?

- Incorporated in Delaware.

Steve Stromm

Why are the General Bylaws and the Planning Board superseding the Zoning Bylaws, i.e. on Scenic Roads?

Town Counsel: One authority doesn't necessarily supersede- Blue Wave needs to get approvals from all the town governments. They need each and every approval that is required from the town's general bylaws.

Steve Stromm sites: Section 12. Scenic Roads Act:

Paragraph 8: environmental impacts, scenic aesthetic characteristics, tree/ wall removal.

Town Counsel replies that is not a general usage

It is more about moving stone walls, and taking trees down

Helen Pollard:

Town Counsel sometimes gives wrong counsel to the town. She has been here since 1967 - and has witnessed this.

Site Plan Review: Has to talk to all the other departments and are supposed to be getting conditions from all those boards.

The Planning Board cannot move forward without a Notice of Intent.

NOI is required by the conservation commission.

Important to take a look at the whole battery system.

Tonight I gave a list of all the things that Blue Wave did not have as part of their plan.

There is no plan from Blue Wave.

Fire and safety: Batteries burn at 2000 degrees F. Forever chemicals

The planning board has a responsibility to protect the rural character of the town, the historical nature of the town. I understand there is a permission by Right here - but the planning board has the responsibility to mitigate the problems to the town.

Your action should be to deny the application.

Julie

Westfield, Greenfield, Northfield, Pittsfield are all fighting this. Small towns are all able to fight this.

We have an 8 person volunteer fire department.

Massachusetts Association of Health Boards:

Batteries BESS: hydrogen chloride, carbon monoxide, carbon dioxide, - aging population is a problem

Increased fire needs, firefighting.

Its not short term solutions.

This is a health concern in a very small town.

Chris Landry

"From Alaska to Appalachia": is a documentary film maker that lives in Chesterfield - has been interviewing people who are arguing against big companies.

Can demonstrate what happens when a town comes together and says NO.

Why is Blue Wave here with an incomplete application?

Because this is part of the process of intent.

Question Blue Wave: Will you try and force it through if the whole town is against it.

Blue Wave's response: They are here to gather input from the community.

Emily Larabee:

Blue Wave site in Douglas MA in 2024 Oak Street: Coldwater fisheries - test now show no heavy metals but 6 PFAs found

She will share with the planning board and she feels that it shows a threat to the town.

Questions why Bart thinks this is not a health and safety risk.

Blue Wave Responds to this project: higher rain period - there was some washout. Worked with the Douglas and Sutton conservation commissions to remediate the construction.

He thinks PFAS was not related to their project - it had everything to do with the sediment on the site and leaving the site and tree cutting for that particular project

Bart: responds: He does not have an opinion whether or not it is a health and safety risk yet.

Bart has a lot of respect for town meeting. Until Town Meeting decides to change the bylaw - it is our responsibility as the Planning Board to follow the current bylaw of the town.

Julie:

Mill bank river was polluted by Solar project

Westfield is a federally protected river - what is the long term affect of these federally protected waterways?

Online: **Steve Coyne:** Bart is a "maker of hay in Worthington". Should this not be disclosed? Does this count as a conflict of interest.

Bart states: I am a maker of hay in Worthington.

Gabrielle:

Does Zoning by right supersede environmental laws?

I don't believe that we should prove if we have to - if there is a health and safety risk. Is it possible to hire a Compliance Officer during construction in addition to the building inspector?

Counsel: The purview of this board does not have the ability to deny this project with something that is outside of their purview.

Site Plan Review:

Clarification: Solar protections are huge. Safety and welfare,
If there is a denial - than she is the one defending it in court.

Gabrielle asked if Blue Wave has threatened to sue?

Bart responds: No

Annie Lagoy:

Importance of impacts of construction

Pounding into clay

Mr. Lagoy:

Threat to 1805 foundation

Amy Prone:

Asking about the water protection district: Why aren't we talking more about that - as it is half the map?

Bart responds: That it is very much part of the conversation.

Steve Stromm: Question for Town Counsel:

In your opinion can this board deny the special permit tonight?

Town Counsel's Response: The board cannot deny the application; the denial is not defensible. There is a greater risk that the court will say to approve without more process.

Should the board continue the hearing tonight?

That is not up to Town Counsel to decide.

John Sullivan:

Town will need to hold funds for decommissioning as one of our conditions.

If they cannot provide the funds to decommission this how can this move forward?

Helen Pollard:

Clarification about the bylaws of the town.

Case Law suggests that this is not a valid application

Filing an application that does not have all the information is not a valid application.

Blue Wave does not have rights, but they have responsibility. Can we reject based on incompleteness?

Blue Wave Responds:

Questioning about zoning and land use.

Gabrielle:

Application is incomplete vs. not valid application.

Does Blue Wave help us to hire a compliance team - does blue wave provide funds for that or is that something the town

Town Counsel:

Doesn't know what is meant by an "invalid" application.

In my opinion that is not a defensible opinion.

Give the board the opportunity to thoroughly vet the process.

Ms. Sharon:

Does 61A still apply when the property becomes dual use with both agricultural and solar as usage.

If the property is no longer going to be in the 61A, then the town could possibly buy the land and preserve it.

Sarah Hamilton Chesterfield Planning Board:

What is the specific use as allowed by right?

Bart refers her to our bylaws.

Kevin:

Asking about what is the range of these conditions -

PILOT agreements can be a part of the agreement. The term would not be through us but the existence of it would be.

The actual set back lines are not defined on the property. Could the PILOT not help make up for the screening being slow going.

The Right of Way (owned by the Town) is not the same as the property line, we need to confirm where the setback begins.

Next drawings need to be better defined where the lines lie.

Bart: Responds: Conditioning screening. Buffering with earthen mounds?

Conditions are much more able to address things as listed in the bylaw.

Bart Follow up:

Online Question: Can we limit the size of the solar field?

Town Counsel: Things can't be changed outside of the bylaw, limiting the size has to be project specific, issue specific, and bylaw specific.

Bigger setbacks from town.

Online: Hiring engineer/ consultant: Who pays for that

Applicant is paying for these consultants.

Conclusions:

Planning Board requested application to DOER, and MDAR, still waiting to be received.

Can't Deny but Can Approve with conditions.

Possible to sign off with conditions with Site Plan Review;

i.e. Applicant must work with the fire department and other departments to help mitigate their concerns for the town moving forward.

Main Town Concerns:

Pollution, Fire, Water runoff, health, safety, welfare of town, aesthetics to town, neighboring properties negatively affected and devalued.

Town Counsel asks about the completion of the application:

Application is currently incomplete

Bart: Requests a date to continue town meeting

Kate Bavelock makes a motion to **continue hearing to January 8th at 6:30 p.m.**

Kathy Ford seconds motion

Unanimous decision: Meeting will be continued.

Past meeting minutes signed.

Signatures

Kate Bann


Planning Board

Public Hearing

Special Permit

190 Ridge Road

Please Print

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Planning Board Meeting

November 20, 2025 . 6:04 PM . ID: 845552877

Share Status

Access: Public

Expires: November 27, 2025

Shared content: Video, Notes, Meeting info, Insession Chat, Summary

Attendees

Beth Greenblatt

Bart Niswonger

Jonathan bath

Aaron Simms

Suzanne Kulik

paul

Jay Dreschnack

Helen

Dave Roemer

Brie - BlueWave

RB

Morgan

JLL

Mike Marich

Mike Zhe

Deb Phillips

Steven Lipsitz

Ryan

walter fritz jr

Gabrielle Hayes (BlueWave)

JPH

Kelly Wolf

John fosnot

Kiersten marich

Steve coyne

JTaylor

Henry Brown

Elizabeth parish

Allison

Ashley Tompkins

Lisa Ouellet

Sarah McMullen

Don chase

RB

Allison

Worthington

Mark Feinstein

P

Allison

Nick & penny

Diane

Jonathan bath

Julie

Julie

+14133266051

+14133266051

Talk Time

Organizer

Attendees

100%

Beth Greenblatt

00 mins . 0%

Bart Niswonger

02 mins . 83%

Jonathan bath

00 mins . 2%

Aaron Simms

00 mins . 0%

Suzanne Kulik

00 mins . 0%

paul

00 mins . 0%

Jay Dreschnack

00 mins . 0%

Helen

00 mins . 0%

Dave Roemer

00 mins . 0%

Brie - BlueWave

00 mins . 0%

RB

00 mins . 0%

Morgan

00 mins . 0%

JLL

00 mins . 0%

Mike Marich

00 mins . 0%

Mike Zhe

00 mins . 0%

Deb Phillips

00 mins . 0%

Steven Lipsitz

00 mins . 0%

Ryan

00 mins . 0%

walter fritz jr

00 mins . 0%

Gabrielle Hayes (BlueWave)

00 mins . 0%

JPH

00 mins . 0%

Kelly Wolf

00 mins . 0%

John fosnot

00 mins . 0%

Kiersten marich

00 mins . 0%

Steve coyne

00 mins . 0%

JTaylor

00 mins . 0%

Henry Brown

00 mins . 0%

Elizabeth parish

00 mins . 0%

Allison

00 mins . 0%

Ashley Tompkins

00 mins . 0%

Lisa Ouellet

00 mins . 0%

Sarah McMullen

00 mins . 0%

Don chase

00 mins . 0%

RB

00 mins . 0%

Allison

00 mins . 0%

Worthington

00 mins . 0%

Mark Feinstein

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P

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Allison

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Nick & penny

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Diane

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Jonathan bath

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Julie

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