

Planning Board Meeting March 12 2026 @ 6:30 p.m: Worthington Town Hall

In Attendance:

Bart Niswonger
Kathy Ford
Kate Bavelock
Anna Maunz
Mike Dondiego
Julia Sharon
Ramona Gallegher
Christopher Nolan (PARE)
Emily Larrabee
Helen Pollard
Julie Grom
Nestor Matthews

Virtual Attendance

Diane Brenner
Cathy Pease
EA
Emily Larrabee
JG
Jeff Babineaux (ICS)
MAK
Annie Lagoy
Steve Coyne
Trip Shaw

Agenda

- **Discussion of 190 Ridge Road**
- **Technical Review report**
 - Christopher Nolan is here representing PARE to discuss with us technical review
 - Site visit plan: April 24th
 - Storm water management, screening and battery system seem to be big issues
 - Kate Bavelock: Asks about the bedrock aquifer being part of the engineering review. 2005 studies show a very shallow water table.
 - Chris asks how this interacts with the special permit application
 - Bart: Special permit and Site Plan Review have been merged
 - Chris: wind issues: wind would need to be pretty substantial for it to be an issue.
 - They have to give us wind analysis
 - they haven't done any perc tests yet or any ground analysis yet: which seems problematic. PARE will ask them to show that these issues won't be a problem.
 - the fact that they haven't done any sub-surface work is unusual.
 - their first assessments were done through NRCS information

- Nestor asks about contamination/ pollution issues/ how we can assess: What the risks actually are. How do we assess that. PARE: their job is to get us those answers.
- ICS: subcontractor that PARE uses to deal with electrical/ battery/ hook ups.
- Kate: asks about abutters wells
- Chris has started to put together a spread sheet about questions and answers:
 - Glare issues - are not normally an issue. The solar panels are designed to soak up as much solar as possible.
 - Glare Study is still a great thing to ask for.
 - they've indicated they're willing to do some screening: ideally get more screening due to Glare.
 - Noise is more of an issue- there is less noise at night.
 - Mike asks about noise from wind through the solar panels.
 - Nestor asks question about connection with Eversource: PARE can work with them to minimize the amount of poles - see what they're willing to do underground.
 - Spill containment for the BESS: can we ask for that - how does that happen
 - Containment for fire suppression : ICS will work on that
 - Water flow: and how the water is used
 - Mike Dondiego: Operational maintenance phase
 - How is equipment changed
 - Operation and Maintenance Plan
- Bart: question on timing: They've pushed a lot of answers back until the last minute.
 - Economic uncertainty: tariffs etc may be also affecting their ability to respond.
 - Permitting on some of these takes time
- Question about when they file the building permit there is still able to be input from the town.
 - Drafting conditions to help with that
- Chris wants to send them an analysis thats complete: until a site visit happens: they are going to ask them all the things
 - Conditions for approval: the answers that they don't give us.
 - Reference standards that they have to meet the minimum standards on.
- Mike: Question about technology trends - 2-5 years out. Is ICS able to have that capability to provide that information.
 - Jeff (ICS): responds yes. The more unusual technology gets the trickier the response.
 - SMART program now requires and Energy Storage System (maybe not only batteries)- this is a question.
- Helen Pollard:
 - Procurement lead times for batteries: seen anything from 6-18 months. When would that procurement be placed.
 - Allowing anything to get to the building permit stage - would make the town lose leverage: Need to make sure we are deeply concerned
 - How do we make sure the concerns of the towns/ abutters are covered.
 - Example: Frost Heaves - detailed info.
 - Electrical Poles: They will put in 3 phase power along the road: poles will get higher.
- Discussion about questions brought up from the town: and how that is being tracked.
- Julie asks about if there is a plan in the O& M plan for individual solar panels breaking down
 - the normal response is for them to dispose of the panels in accordance with state law.

- in 2 states they are not considered toxic waste.
- Going forward there can be laws made for the governance of disposal
 - Question of a decommissioning board: people from the town that have a vested interest- as part of conditions.
 - Bonds - as standards going forward: discuss bond amounts.
- Dianne Brenner: Penalties for disposing not properly.
 - heavy penalties
- Some towns have special permit bylaws that contain rules around decommissioning board
- Chris: Looking into putting a special permit into effect for these projects: In a special permit bylaw
- Julia Sharon: asks about when a permit is filed can we increase that price.
 - Land use attorney
 - “Local Government Representative”
 - Fees would have to be changed at town meeting
 - Fees in most towns are substantially higher.
- Kate asks about insurance:
 - In future Bylaw: want to be a “named insured in bylaws”
 - pollution inclusion
 - Commission on insurance policy as well (as co-insured you would be entitled to notification).
 - Town and landowner should be included on the insurance policy
- Bart asks about forming conditions : Identifying risks and insurance coverage.
- DEP is doing site visit on March 23rd
 - abutters asked for a NOI
- The applicant will be requested to do a perc test.
 - Would the Perc test be witnessed by us.
- The geo-technical has not been sufficient thus far
- Fire Department has more ability than anybody to put conditions on this project
- Won't be a lot more information until the Site Visit
- End of May: tentatively May 28th: Public Hearing
- Annie Lagoy asking about Glare Studies
 - Mitigation.
- Blue Wave will provide glare and sound studies
 - Sound studies are done at the border
 - PARE will review the study: information that they can digest- information that is adequate/ not adequate
- Question about why they submitted a subdivision plan when they already have an application in.
- Site plan review process could be amended to bylaws to include a time line for responses.
- Question about the town needing insurance while they are in this in between phase.
 - talk to Town Counsel
- Emily: Risks the town is taking on with their water supply.
 - Storm water, ground water are the biggest issues

- Mike Dondiego: Working down his list
 - FMECA Analysis
 - Probability of failures in multiple systems, detectability
 - Define framework for how its going to be done.
- Annie: Drainage ditch in the new plan is very close to abutters house.

- **Discussion of submission to Office of Attorney General**

- Added a case number. Send email on Monday to Attorney General.

- **Discussion of DOER proposals, and draft response**

- "Anything the towns needs assistance on, they can request from the state"- DOER.
- Kathy ford moves to approve the draft regulation from the Town of Worthington to

DOER

- Anna Maunz seconds
- Vote Unanimous

- Department of Environmental Review
- Email at: DOER.siting.Permitting@mass.gov
- comments due tomorrow at 5 p.m.

- Kate asks about Local Government Representative

- Ideal world there would be a more regional representative
- PVPC as a regional entity: this is what a regional planning entity should be doing.
- Coordinating all the town components and with the applicant
- Ask select board to put this on their agenda
- Reach out to REPS
- Kathy to reach out to CDC

- Nestor will prepare to talk with someone at the next PVPC meeting.
- Is PVPC thinking about this question at all?

- **Public Comment**

- Helen Pollard: Subdivision Plans are not currently legal/ in accordance.
 - Plans don't set aside any open space
 - Nestor responds: their sole purpose is to freeze plans.

- **Correspondence**

- looked over
- going to change link to meeting folders

- **Other business**

- PVPC Letter
 - Kate moves to send the letter as written to PVPC
 - Nestor seconds
 - Unanimous vote.

- **Approval of past minutes**

Anna Maunz Makes motion to adopt minutes

Bart seconds

Unanimous vote

Meeting adjourned at 9:20 p.m.

Handwritten signatures in blue ink, including 'Kathy Ford' and 'Nestor'.