

Readfield Planning Board

Meeting Minutes of January 9, 2024 - Approved

Planning Board Members Present: Paula Clark (Chair), Jack Comart, Brandon Fike, Peter Bickerman, Don Witherill, Bill Buck, John Mitchell

Excused: Henry Clauson

Others Attending: Chip Stephens (CEO), Anjelica Pittman (Board Secretary), John Cushing, Kara Moody, Martha Staskus, Grace Keene, Ed Berdman, Jamel Torres

Meeting called to order by Paula at 6:30 PM

Public Hearing:

1. Norwich Technologies / Readfield Main Street Solar LLC – Continuation of Planning Board

Deliberations from December 12, 2023 - Proposal to rezone to a Commercial Industrial District (CID) to allow the construction of the Main Street Solar Project, a distributed generation large scale solar energy system on the south side of Main Street (Route 17). A CID, as required by Article 7, Sec 8 and defined in Article 9, requires commercial, industrial, & infrastructure activities with structures of greater than 5000 square feet coverage to be located in a CID. The project parcel is proposed to contain greater than 5000 sq. ft. of Solar Panels coverage on 71.93 acres and the site will be on an open field portion of the project. The total fenced area will be 9.59 acres, the total project limits will be 17.51 acres and total impervious area of the project will be .25 acres.

The address is on **Main Street on Map 143 Lot 014 in the Rural District**

Continuing the Public Hearing from December 12, 2023, Paula opened the discussion on the Norwich application and the steps taken to this point, as well as the process going forward. No additional comments from the public were submitted during the extended Public Hearing continuation for either application.

Motion to close the Public Hearing made by Bill, **seconded** by Don, **vote 7-0** in favor

For the boards' deliberation, members discussed each standard listed under Article 9, Section 2 of the LUO. As for the first standard required, the board found that Norwich's application is consistent with the towns' Comprehensive Plan and is in keeping with the town's rural character. The second standard was also consistent with the LUO; the applicant made an appropriate argument and addressed the needs of the town and compatibility with their application. The third standard requires that the application serve the public good, safety or welfare of the Town. The Board found that the applicant met the third standard, there will be no negative climate impacts with his project, it will provide clean energy to the State of Maine, and there are anticipated of increased real estate tax revenue. The fourth and final standard to meet in section 2 is that the proposal shall be protective of all natural resources including significant wildlife habitat. Norwich has looked over town maps and consulted with natural areas program as well as IF&W with no issues found. The applicant looked at soils maps and tested and identified a small portion of the parcel with agricultural soil in part of the property that is not being developed. John inquired if there is an erosion and sedimentation plan. It was noted that the applicant did address the issue with their submissions and that issue will be revisited during site review. Peter mentioned there is no risk to wildlife and confirmed with the applicant that the utility lines will be run underground. Jack also mentioned that the land will be returned to its natural state once the solar project is decommissioned. It was agreed that all four standards were met by the applicant.

Readfield Planning Board

Motion made by John to recommend the re-zoning application to the Select Board with standard conditions to limit the development in the rezoned area to the proposal presented in the application only, **seconded** by Bill, **vote 7-0** in favor.

2. Cushing Storage LLC - Continuation of Planning Board Deliberations from December 12, 2023 -

Proposal to rezone to a Commercial Industrial District (CID) to allow the construction of additional storage space on 866 Main Street (Route 17). A CID, as required by Article 7, Sec 8 as defined in Article 9, requiring commercial, industrial and infrastructure activities with structures greater than 5000 square feet coverage to be located in a CID. The proposed project is to build two additional storage buildings, the first building will be approximately 100' x 20', and the other storage building will be approximately 100' x 50' which when added to the existing structure exceeds the 5000 square foot limit.

The address is at **866 Main Street on Map 121 Lot 020 in the Village District**

Paula again gave a briefing detailing the application process up to this point and what the next steps will be going forward.

Motion to close the Public Hearing made by Bill, **seconded** by Peter, **vote 7-0** in favor.

For this application, the board reviewed the same four standards in Article 9 Section 2 of the LUO. The board found the first standard in line with the application, that the application is consistent with the Comprehensive Plan and the business is located appropriately in a growth area of town. The second standard was also met; the application is consistent with the surrounding area and the location of the buildings proposed being down the slope of the property and will be well screened. Jack noted that it is a good use of the land to locate the storage units on one parcel rather than to locate them on several non-contiguous parcels. Jack noted that the ultimate exact location, size of the proposed project and buffering will need to be ultimately determined through the site review process. Paula noted that the town maps were reviewed by the applicant for natural and protected areas and there are no noted adverse impacts. The third standard was met based on the need for residents to have access to storage facilities, and that there will be increased tax revenues for the town. The fourth and final standard requiring protection of natural resources and wildlife habitat was completed by the applicant with the review of natural resources map, there is no wildlife area designations and erosion control and buffers are to be addressed in the site review process. Paula noted that the standards have been met and the application is consistent with the LUO requirements.

Motion made by Don to recommend the application to the Select Board with standard conditions to limit the development in rezoned area to that which was presented in the application only, **seconded** by Peter, **vote 7-0** in favor.

Minutes:

Approve Minutes from December 12, 2023 (taken out of order)

Don **motioned** to approve the minutes as modified, **seconded** by Bill, **vote 7-0** in favor.

New Business:

Prepared by Anjelica Pittman, Board Secretary (approved 01/30/2024)

Readfield Planning Board

Presentation Concerning LD 2003 and Readfield -

Jamel Torres from NorthStar Planning presented a summary of LD2003. Its primary purpose is to increase housing opportunities in the state, triggering varying impacts and modifications on towns' LUOs. The legislation allows additional dwelling units on single lots within designated growth areas. Jamel noted that Readfield's updated Comprehensive Plan will be beneficial in making changes in the LUO.

Jamel sent a memo to the Planning Board with an overview of the three sections of LD 2003 that are relevant to Readfield; the density bonus (2.5x), multiple dwelling units, and accessory dwelling units (ADU). He did note that additional dwelling units are still required to meet setback limits. Jamel also recommended adding deed restrictions for a certain number of years to ensure homes remain affordable to achieve a density bonus. Any lot with a single family home can have an ADU and it would be exempt from residential density requirements.

NorthStar did an extensive review on Readfield's ordinances and provided proposed modifications for LD 2003 incorporation. Jamel said they begin with minimal revisions and he always recommends a town attorney review, which Readfield does yearly with LUO revisions. The memo Jamel sent also gives recommended and required changes consistent with the statute.

The board and Jamel discussed the possibility of adding a standard for minimum duration of ADU rentals to limit the number of short-term rentals. Chip suggested not incorporating language regarding short-term rentals this year because that issue could delay the process. Instead, he suggested that we stay cognizant of it for future LUO revisions.

Paula suggested reviewing certain section of the Comprehensive Plan to ensure the LD 2003 changes are consistent with it.

Jack inquired how a property with an ADU might be transferred in a sale and if it would reflect on the deed in these cases. The maximum size limit to ADUs in the draft language is currently 700 sq ft; some towns use a percentage of the primary home. Jamel responded that the square footage in the language can be changed if the board felt different.

Jamel suggested he come back for another meeting to go over every section in detail for specific language. Paula requested that Jamel identify for the board where there are decisions the board will need/should make in the draft LD 2003 revisions in a follow up meeting.

The board will continue to review the memo sent by Jamel and reconvene for this subject January 30th. The January 30th meeting will replace of the January 23rd meeting and should leave ample time for follow up meetings with NorthStar.

Meeting adjourned by Paula at 8:28PM