

**TOWN OF BELMONT
PLANNING BOARD**

**MEETING MINUTES
OCTOBER 22, 2013**

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7:05 p.m. Meeting called to order.

Present: Michael Battista, Chair; Elisabeth Allison, Vice Chair; Sami Baghdady; Charles Clark; Joseph DeStefano, Jeffrey Wheeler, Liaison to the Planning Board

**7:05 Public Hearing – Amend Site Plan Approval
Install Roof Mounted Solar Energy System on Wellington School**

Ms. Allison read the public hearing notice.

Roger Colton, Co-Chair of the Energy Committee, introduced the development team for the project.

Dennis DaRu, project manager for Broadway Electric, presented his proposal for roof mounted solar panels on the Wellington School. He stated that the panels will be:

- Mounted on a ballast system of concrete blocks that have been pre-engineered to sit securely on top of the roof.
- Tied into the school's electric system to offset the school's energy usage.
- Hidden from the public view and cannot be seen from the street.
- Relatively flat with a slight pitch of 14 degrees.
- Installed on the roof and not on existing rooftop units

He added that the inverters will not make any noise since they will be enclosed in an existing mechanical area and that two panels will be moved elsewhere on the roof so that access will be maintained to existing HVAC units. He further added that the panel life is generally 20 years, but some systems have exceeded that. He stated that after the Board's approval, an engineer would be hired to conduct a structural analysis of the building. Mr. Battista expressed concern about the school's roof and whether it would support the concrete blocks, which weigh 23 tons. Dan Griffin, an associate of Mr. DaRu, assured the Board that a structural analysis will be conducted to insure that the school will support the system prior to the issuance of the building permit.

Mr. DeStefano inquired about elevations and commented that it was difficult to understand the full impact of the system without them. He also expressed concern if the structural integrity of the roof was compromised and asked for clarification on the ballast system. Mr. DaRu stated that it would be spelled out in the contract with the Town, and that an approved roof inspector would inspect the roof before and after the placement of the panels for damage. Mr. DeStefano commented that it seemed like there were too many unanswered questions.

Mr. Baghdady expressed support for the project but reiterated the need for elevations and final plans. He commented that it is the Board's job to ask the difficult questions and that they have to

preserve the character and quality of the surrounding neighborhood. Ms. Allison agreed and suggested that the applicant come back to the Board when the plans are final. She also suggested that the noise levels ought to be a condition of approval, and that the decibel level should be no higher than what it currently is. Mr. DaRu responded that the level will not exceed 60 decibels, and the panels will not run at night. He added that the system sleeps at night and therefore does not create any noise.

Ms. Allison asked for clarity on the duration of construction. Mr. DaRu stated that construction will take 8-10 weeks and will begin in December. She also questioned the roof's warranty and wanted to make sure that it will remain in full force once the re-inspection is done and no damage is found. Mr. DaRu responded that it will.

Mr. Battista inquired about the expected life of the panels and wanted further clarification about the conduit as it comes off the roof and down the side of the school. He also wanted more information regarding solar glare and the inverters. Mr. Battista pointed out that the solar system had a life expectancy that would extend beyond the Roof Warranty. Mr. DaRu responded that he did not anticipate glare to be a problem because the panels are almost flat. He said that the inverters will be within an existing screened area and that similar facilities exist on other buildings in other communities.

Mr. Colton provided further information on the solar project. He stated that other schools in Town were studied but could not support the panels because of their ages. The Wellington was chosen because it is new and under the current Stretch Code was designed to support a solar energy system. He explained that under the purchase power agreement (PPA) is for 20 years and that the developer pays for the installation, maintenance and removal of the system. He stated that at the end of 20 years, the panels can be removed, the Town can buy the panels, or the PPA could be extended for 5 years. He added that the Town will see a financial benefit because they would pay less for electricity, there will be environmental and educational benefits of the project, and that the system will generate about twenty-five percent of energy that will be used at the Wellington School. Mr. DiCologero, Finance Director of Belmont School system, reported that the cost saving to the Wellington School in the first year will be \$1,000.00.

Comments from the Audience:

1. Jacob Knowles, 67 Bartlett Avenue, asked for confirmation that the Wellington School was strong enough to support the panels and there was a relatively low chance of roof damage.
2. John Carey, 124 Orchard Street, wanted clarification about the inverters. Mr. DaRu stated that there would be 6 inverters and that they would be within an existing screened area.
3. Darrel King, 30 Long Avenue, stated that he supported the project but asked why the inverters could not go in the basement, in order to minimize noise. Mr. Griffin stated that it would be more efficient if the inverters were placed closer to the panels and that they would actually resonate louder inside the building. Mr. Battista reminded the applicant

that there is a decibel level that cannot be exceeded.

Discussion ensued about the decibel levels and reluctance to put panels in place first and address the noise problem later. The Board's stand is to ensure the decibel level is not exceeded and that the neighborhood is protected.

4. Margaret Waters, 106 Orchard Street, agreed that the inverters should go into the basement to minimize impacts on the existing noise problem. She expressed concern that July and August will be the noisiest time for the panels, when the School is supposed to be quiet.
5. Merle Kummer, 79 School Street, stated support for the project.
6. John Kolterman, 107 Orchard Street, expressed support for the project.
7. Deborah Lockett, 112 Dalton Road, questioned who benefits from the energy that will be generated in the summer and wondered if there was an opportunity for the energy to be used by the residents. Mr. Colton responded that there was not.
8. Vincent Stanton, 32 Royal Road, inquired about cleaning the panels since they need to be clean in order to maximize production of energy.
9. Ian Todreas, Co-Chair of the Energy Committee, stated he is very supportive of the project and mentioned that many communities have solar systems on their buildings. He asked how the noise levels of the inverters compared to the noise levels of a central AC unit. Mr. Griffin guessed that the AC unit was louder.
10. Darrell King, 30 Long Avenue, asked about the impact of snow. Mr. Griffin stated that snow typically is gone within a day.
11. Margaret Waters, 106 Orchard Street, asked for more information on noise and glare.
12. Jacob Knowles, 67 Bartlett Avenue, explained the compounding effects of noise and stated that noise should not be impacted by this project.

Discussion ensued about the lack of information available to the Board. All concurred that they did not feel comfortable at this time voting on this application since they needed more information. The Board requested elevation drawings, the drawings to show street names and North, a noise study performed by an engineer and the possibility of putting the inverters in the basement, and a glare or reflectivity study performed by an engineer. Mr. DaRu expressed concern that if a vote was not taken tonight that the project might not be able to move forward. He suggested voting on the project and attaching conditions to the permit. He added that reflective studies are cost prohibitive for a project of this size. Mr. Colton added that the panels lie low on the roof and that the glare will be directed up and not at the homes.

Due to a lack of information as stated above it was concluded that the public hearing should be

continued to give the applicant the opportunity to provide the missing information so that the Board members could make an informed vote. Mr. Battista requested a motion to continue the public hearing.

Moved by Mr. Baghdady to continue the Public Hearing on Amending the Site Plan Approval to November 5 at 7:00 pm. Seconded by Ms. Allison. Motion passes.

9:05 Deliberate and Vote on the Amendment to the Demolition Delay By-Law

Moved by Ms. Allison to recommend adoption of the amendment to the Demolition Delay By-Law. Seconded by Mr. Baghdady. Motion passes.

9:05 Prepare for November 4th Special Town Meeting

There was a brief discussion about who would represent the Board in front of Town Meeting when the Demolition Delay article is presented.

9:10 Discuss Solutions to the Citizens Petition on Demolition Moratorium

Mr. Battista updated the Board on meeting with the Citizen Petitioners. He stated that he, Mr. DeStefano, Mr. Clancy and Mr. Wheeler will meet with Town Counsel to discuss possible solutions and then will meet with the Petitioners again.

9:15 Approval of Minutes

Moved by Ms. Allison to approve the minutes of January 8, 2013, February, 15, 2013, April 9, 2013, and July 27, 2013. Seconded by Mr. DeStefano. Motion passes.

9:15 Ongoing/Upcoming Planning Board Projects and Updates

Mr. Clark reported that the Housing Trust will be applying for CPA funding for a 'first time home buyer program'. He suggested that the Board write a letter of support for the application. A brief discussion ensued regarding support for the application. Ms. Allison wanted more information on how the program works. Mr. Baghdady agreed and stated that he did not want to vote supporting the application without more information. Mr. Clark said he will ask someone from the Housing Trust to speak at a future meeting of the Planning Board.

Adjourned – 9:45 p.m.