

Town of Princeton Solar Farm Committee (SFC)

Meeting Minutes

November 16, 2023

Meeting Called to Order at 2:04pm

Attendance:

- *Members present, virtually:* Richard Chase (RC); Bruce Dean (BD); Corey Burnham-Howard (CBH); Helga Lyons (HL)
- *Members absent:* John Mirick (JM);
- *Liaisons present, virtually:* Gerald Pellegrini (GP) of EAC; Lar Greene (LG) of Board of Health; Bob Cummings (BC) of Selectboard; Jennifer Greene of Advisory Committee; Richard Chase (RC) for PMLD
- *Liaisons absent:* None.

Agenda:

- Members reviewed the agenda.
- Members discussed which individuals in the list of names on the agenda were members and which were liaisons. Website does not list members or terms.
 - o HL expressed concern about the PMLD liaison simultaneously filling a voting member position. It was noted that another PMLD commissioner could not serve as liaison while RC served on SFC without having to publicly post notice SFC meetings as PMLD meetings as well since there are only three PMLD Commissioners. CBH expressed her opinion that it made sense for RC to serve as voting member while also sharing related information from PMLD.
- It was noted that CBH sent information and links of related background materials to SFC members following the last SFC meeting:
 - o DCR Stewardship Map; Town's Access Easement over the access road to the landfill; Princeton Assessor Map of landfill parcels; Desktop Environmental Review related to possible solar development at the landfill;
 - o links to: Massachusetts Guide to Developing Solar PV at Massachusetts Landfill; Massachusetts Fact Sheet: Developing Renewable Energy Facilities on Closed Landfills; FAQ from Solar Farm Working Group on Solar Farm Article (that ultimately passed at June's Town Meeting); Solar Power Feasibility Report prepared for the Town of Bernardston Select Board and Town Energy Committee by Jacobs Engineering to assist the Town of Bernardston in assessing the feasibility of a solar array installation at the Bernardston Landfill site; MassDEP webpage with information on Post-Closure Use Permit steps and instructions; List of Massachusetts Closed Landfills with Permits for Renewable Energy-- including town names, energy facility size, and link to Post-Closure Use Permit for each; examples of post-closure use permits for various Towns; info on steps taken by Town of Dennis and Town of Beverly on their solar projects; example RFP for solar projects in the Town of Shirley and Town of Ayer

- **ACTION:** CBH to send links to Jennifer Greene.

National Grid Westminster Line Capacity Update

- RC looked into whether there was any line capacity for possibly generated solar energy to transmit on the National Grid Westminster Line. He found there is no available capacity.
 - GP asked if the available capacity was flexible and may be available in the future, and RC said it was pretty inelastic but that there could possibly be availability. GP asked if a project could get on a waitlist for capacity. RC said possibly with cost.
 - Without capacity on the Westminster line, in order to have capacity to transmit solar energy generated at the former landfill, PMLD will need to have an interconnect to Sterling.

PMLD/SMLD Interconnect Update

- RC reported that a study was in progress to determine how an electric transmission load change may impact SMLD infrastructure. With an interconnect, PMLD would add approx. 4MW load to the SMLD system
- RC noted that an interconnect would require some PMLD upgrades and that connections would be added over time.
- RC noted that a grant could possibly pay for SMLD and PMLD's interconnect work.
- When asked about timelines, RC estimated a decision on the interconnect option would be made in 1 – 2 months, and that an interconnection could be accomplished within a year.
- BD asked what the benefit to Sterling would be of agreeing to an interconnect. RC said it would be payment for transmission, and also noted that it would ultimately save PMLD a bit in transmission costs—including potential contributory payments for pending Westminster substation upgrades. RC also thought a PMLD-SMLD interconnection would allow or other renewable energy purchasing options.
- HL asked if SMLD knew about the potential solar project—as they conduct their study. RC said yes.

DEP-related Information/Discussions

- CBH updated the committee as to her efforts in reaching out to DEP for advice and recommendations for moving the project forward.
 - CBH reached out to Jim McQuade- the Solid Waste Section Chief for DEP CERO. (The Waste & Recycling Committee had been working with Jim and informed the SFC that Jim wanted the SFC to reach out to him if planning to move forward with solar on landfill). Jim is out of office for over a month.
 - In Jim's absence, CBH spoke a couple of times with DEP's Dan Guglielmi
 - Dan appreciated that SFC reached out but didn't feel DEP had much to be involved with until Post-Use Closure Permit Application but did agree that he'd look for any records that DEP might have with regard to SFC's feasibility assessment of the site—such as landfill closure, type of cap (etc.)
 - Dan was unable to find any electronic records and only one paper record (apparently not unusual for those decades)—which was a plan submitted to DEP in the mid-1990s which proposed a cap for approx. 1.5 acres of the landfill. That

plan referenced that 4 acres of the landfill was capped with clay. Dan was unable to find any document certifying that any part of the landfill was actually capped in accordance with DEP-approved plans.

- Dan advised that in order to proceed forward and obtain a Post-Use Closure Permit for solar development on the landfill—the Town would first need a “Landfill Certification Letter” that certifies that the landfill was capped in accordance with DEP-approved plans.
 - Dan suggested SFC look through Town records. CBH contacted Terri Longtine who offered SFC could search records in the Town Hall attic.
 - Dan also suggested SFC reach out to the Town’s consultant from the time period of the landfill closure—which may be Tighe & Bond—to see if they had records. Sherry Patch did that at CBH’s request. Tighe & Bond sent along a few documents from 1995 and 2005. There was no landfill closure report or certification of the cap. The 1995 documents reference a partially capped landfill. Still Tighe & Bond said they “assumed” the landfill was properly closed and they are just doing post-closure monitoring.
 - CBH noted that if SFC is unable to find proof of cap—and type of cap—both Tighe and Bond and DEP’s Dan said that the Town (or a solar developer) could perform an assessment at the landfill (basically hand borings to determine cap type and thickness) (But as Tighe and Bond mentioned—that runs the risk of finding inadequate cover and DEP requiring a remedy. CBH was unsure if such a potential remedy could be required under any circumstance or just if there was a proposed solar development on the landfill.
 - CBH noted that knowing the type of cap on the landfill would also be necessary for solar development engineering since the type of cap determines the weight capacity for solar development.
- Members brainstormed where SFC might be able to find records as to landfill closure and cap. –
 - BD suggested The Landmark archives.
 - **ACTION:** Lar Greene to look at records related to gas monitoring at the landfill and reach out to Princeton Highway Department and Board of Health to search their records.
 - HL thought Town digitized records, which would make a search easier. **ACTION:** HL to reach out to Terry Longtine to inquire as to whether records were digitized.
 - **ACTION:** CBH, HL, and BD to search Town Hall records.
 - **ACTION:** RC to reach out to JM to see if he has institutional knowledge as to closure and capping of landfill and ideas about where to find records.

RFPs and JM outreach to Town Counsel

- RC shared updates from JM:
 - JM reached out to Town Counsel who suggested it would be helpful for SFC to find other RFPs and for SFC to suggest good paragraphs and specific provisions to include in a Princeton RFP for lease of landfill for solar development—and to specify for Town Counsel why SFC recommends specific provisions be included in a Princeton RFP for this project.

Next Steps

- Members noted the feasibility obstacles that should be tackled before pursuing RFP:
 - o Need a DEP provided “Landfill Certification Letter” that certifies that the landfill was capped in accordance with DEP-approved plans—either obtained through records search or current landfill assessment
 - o Finalized plans for and completion of PMLD-SMLD interconnect
 - o Utility easement provided by DCR for utility lines to traverse landfill access road (easement to owner of lines—PMLD or developer)
 - o Likely culvert replacement at access road to allow for heavy equipment/vehicular traffic to landfill for solar development (potentially to be paid for by solar development, but requiring environmental permits and parameters set by environmental agencies)
 - o (HL also noted the current difficulty for solar developers to obtain financing for projects)
- GP suggested a site visit. **ACTION:** GP to coordinate site visit for SFC members/liaisons who have not already toured site and/or are interested. If quorum of voting members plan to attend, the visit must be publicly noticed.

Meeting Minutes:

- Motion to approve SFC October Meeting Minutes as written. Mot: CBH; 2d: BD. Unanimous approval.

Administrative Items:

- Members agreed to next meet on January 18, 2024 at 2p, virtually.

Adjourn:

Meeting adjourned with unanimous consent at 3:30pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Corey Burnham-Howard