

TOWN OF BETHLEHEM
Planning Board Public Meeting
May 8, 2024
Minutes

Present: Alecia Loveless, Veronica Morris, Martie Cook, Sean Gawlik, Sally Fitzgerald. Alternates Angela Cleveland and James Gleason

Absent: Linda Moore and Kevin Roy

Alecia Loveless opens the meeting and appoints Angela Cleveland and James Gleason as full members for tonight's meeting.

Alecia then opens the Public Meeting for Eversource's Request for Waiver Application at 6:00.

Alecia reads the Public Meeting Notice and opens the floor to Eversource.

Eversource's Jennifer Codispoti and Erik Newman were present to go over the project.

Jennifer starts the presentation for the Height Waiver Application Request for U199 and X178 Transmission Line Rebuild Projects by explaining the goal of these projects is to ensure a strong and safe transmission system. To do this Eversource will be replacing the older wooden structures with new steel structures and installing new transmission and communication wire.

Jennifer breaks each project down and explains the U199 project runs Sugar Hill to Littleton, has a total of 104 structures being replaced over a stretch of 9 miles. The stretch in Bethlehem is .45 miles and has 5 structures. The X178 project, which runs from Campton to Whitefield, has a total of 182 structures being replaced over a stretch of 14.1 miles. The stretch in Bethlehem is 7.36 miles and initially consisted of 95 structures but has been reduced to 94 due to wetland concerns for one of the locations.

Eversource's Erik Newman reviews RSA 674:30 which authorizes the Planning Board to "*waive any requirement contained in an ordinance, code, or regulation for an unoccupied structure which is less than 200 square feet in area, which is necessary for the furnishing of utility service for the public health, safety, or general welfare, and for which the utility's siting options are limited by virtue of said structure being a physically integrated component of the utility's transmission or distribution apparatus.*"

Erik is requesting the Planning Board grant the request for waiver based on the four criteria within the RSA, which he argues are satisfied. He further explains that presently all the structures being replaced already exceed the 40' height restrictions and therefore are already non-conforming.

Martie Cook is concerned that the height differences are significant and asks if all the Rights of Way are wide enough. Eversource responded that U199 is wide enough, however X178 is not. Eversource's Tom Tennant stated he believes they are 75' away from the center line of their right of way.

James Gleason questions what will happen to the existing structures. Eversource's response states that the old structures will be removed.

Mike Bruno messages in via Zoom and states the Planning Board can waive regulations but does not have the authority to waive ordinances and wonders if that is the authority of the ZBA.

Martie Cook offers to make a motion so the matter can be opened for discussion and then motions to decline the request for a waiver and refer the matter to the ZBA for a variance. Sally Fitzgerald seconded the motion.

Alecia opens the discussion.

Angela Cleveland is concerned that the motion consists of both the denial and the referral to ZBA. She feels that should have been two different motions. Martie stated that was intentional and goes on to say that this isn't a matter for the Planning Board, but rather the Zoning Board because there is an ordinance in place and that's not being followed.

Veronica is concerned that if the Planning Board does not approve or table this matter tonight the applicant may go to the Public Utility Commission rather than the ZBA. She feels the matter should be tabled and a Public Hearing should be noticed for more public comment.

Martie withdraws her original motion and then motions to table to matter until a Public Hearing can be scheduled. Sally Fitzgerald seconded the motion with full board support to follow.

The Board reviewed the minutes from April 24, 2024. There was a conversation regarding the level of detail recorded as part of the STR discussion. Sean Gawlik motioned to approve the minutes as presented. Angela Cleveland seconded the motion. The majority of the Planning Board voted in favor of approving the minutes. Martie Cook opposed. The motion passed with a 6-1 vote.

The Board then discussed the appointment of a Planning Board member to the STR Committee. Martie informed the Board that she submitted a letter of interest. Alecia asked if anyone else had an interest in sitting on the committee. Angela Cleveland said she'd be happy to help as she has experience but notes Martie's enthusiasm to be part of the committed. It is recommended that Angela submit a letter of interest to fill the community member seat.

Martie wished to reopen the conversation regarding the Capital Improvement Committee that took place on 4/24/24. She did some research and wanted it noted that the RSA encourages more than one Planning Board member to be on the committee. She asks if the Board has no objection, she would also like to submit a letter of interest for that seat.

Angela would like to request the Planning Board receive progress reports from both of these committees.

There being no further business, Sean Gawlik motioned to adjourn the meeting at 7:50. Angela Cleveland seconded with all members voting favor.

Respectfully submitted by,

Dawn Ferringo

Planning and Zoning Clerk

