



**Planning Board
Site Walk Meeting Minutes
Friday August 2, 2024**

Members Present:

Henry Underwood (Vice Chair), Kyle Smith (Chairman), Curtis Hopkins (Selectmen's Representative), Michael Leclerc, Matthew Meacham.

Members Absent:

Jack Gettens (Secretary).

Others Present:

Carol Ogilvie (Planning Board Consultant), Zak Farkes (Rewild Renewables, LLC), John Coons (Road Agent), Ryan Huntoon (Deputy Fire Chief), Jeffrey Read (Sevee & Maher Engineers, Inc.), Richard Thackston (Resident), John Liimatainen (Abutter), Katherine Sandman (Abutter).

The meeting started at approximately 9:00 a.m. on Dort Street near the sites known generally as Dort West and Dort East.

The meeting began with a tour and discussion related to Dort East near the existing driveway access point which was gated and mowed. Mr. Farkes explained that the proposed development to the site will make use of the existing entrance and involve the construction of a gravel road 20' in width that turns in a northerly direction shortly after entering the property. He explained that trees along the road will stay and provide visual screening.

Mr. Farkes provided an overview of the property and proposed development. He explained that the property was cleared or logged in 2015 and again in 2017. He also said that during operation of the solar development vegetation would be cut approximately every 4-5 years and the property will make use of a fence that allows small animals to path underneath and some deer to jump over. Inside the fenced area, stumps would be removed however outside of the fence, stumps would remain after initial clearing. He said this speeded regeneration. Mr. Read added that as part of the project the area would be seeded with a "pollinator mix." Either Mr. Read or Mr. Farkes explained that they were preparing a state permit required for wetland impacts and this was being done simultaneously with the Town's process for permitting development.

Mr. Underwood advised Chairman Smith of the need for the Board to provide notification of the proposed development to the Conservation Commission for their comments related to wetland impacts. Mr. Underwood asked about the location of the proposed wetland impacts and Mr. Farkes

explained they were further into the property. He said that some of what was flagged was related to impacts of logging equipment that was not cleaned up properly.

Attendees walked along a mowed access road, stopping to orient themselves to a provided copy of the plan and to examine aspects of the property.

Figure 1 - Dort Street East. The photo facing east and was taken just beyond the gated entrance near the road.



Mr. Underwood observed that from their position on the property (relatively close to Dort Street), West Hill did not appear to be visible. Mr. Leclerc commented that there was probably no view from locations like Monadnock Berries based on photographs he had reviewed.

Mr. Farkes commented that inside of the property fence, wiring would be underground. Outside of the fence, a series of four poles would be installed to meet Eversource and electrical standards including a “recloser.”

At 9:24 a.m. attendees crossed the street to the Dort West property which was accessed some distance north of the previous location. Mr. Farkes provided more information about the electrical disconnects at the road and said it is their practice to provide training to local police and fire departments and that this was suggested as part of a list of standard conditions. He said a Knox Box would also be provided. Mr. Farkes or Mr. Read indicated the existing “T-shaped” 3-phase wiring would be replaced with more compact wiring to meet the requirements of the facility. Mr. Farkes provided an overview of the property and proposed development.

Figure 2 - Dort Street West. Photo facing west and was taken at the existing gated entrance just south of the proposed access point.



Ms. Ogilvie asked for clarification about how the Town could make use of the power should the project be approved. Mr. Farkes explained that this could be accomplished between Rewild and the Board of Selectmen. Selectman Hopkins mentioned that the Town was hosting a public hearing on August 28th to see if the Town would join Cheshire County’s community power program.

At 9:38 a.m. attendees walked to the proposed road access point for Dort West south of the crematory. Mr. Farkes and Mr. Read explained that they are a resource to the Road Agent to come up with a written agreement regarding impacts to Town roads. They said they look to the Town for their standard operating procedures regarding this process. John said it may be necessary for the road to be shimmed due to its current condition. Jeff asked about how many overlays were on the road currently which was estimated at 2-3.

Mr. Farkes explained that there would be about six months of heavy equipment use on the property, but this was limited to mobilization and demobilization as far as impacts to the road itself. Construction of the electrical components would be accomplished by box trucks and not tractor-trailers. He acknowledged that it is possible damage could occur.

Mr. Farkes or Mr. Read asked about the age of water or sewer pipes under the road. Mr. Leclerc said this was a recent topic of discussion at a recent Water Department meeting. Mr. Read said that usually these pipes are situated more than four feet deep. Mr. Leclerc added that they have found that not all pipes have been located within their easements. Mr. Read said that all utilities would be located prior to work.

At 9:48 a.m. attendees moved to Bigelow Hill Road, initially meeting at the end of the maintained portion of the road.

At 10:00 a.m. Katherine Sandman and John Liimatainen joined the meeting. Ms. Sandman explained that she has maintained the Class VI portion of Bigelow Hill Road for 25 years to access her property and had previously advised the Board of Selectmen.

Mr. Farkes explained that the road would need to be improved from the end of the Class V portion of the road to approximately 50 feet beyond the proposed development entrance. This would be used for vehicles to be able to turn around.

Mr. Coons wondered about developing a fire pond at the location of a stone box culvert and stream crossing. Mr. Read explained that this would not be possible due to regulations that require minimizing impacts. He said as developers they would adhere to what the Town feels needs to be protected. Ms. Ogilvie mentioned that the Town must provide permission to allow a landowner to improve a Town road per State law.

Ms. Sandman shared information about the stream and that ponding occurs in the wheel ruts but that she had not seen the road overtopped. She also commented on the positive aesthetic and historic attributes of the road including the use by stagecoaches. Mr. Thackston commented in favor of upgrading the road and stream crossing.

Attendees walked the Class VI Road to a point near the end of the proposed fence line for the project and walked back to the proposed entrance. The potential to view the property from various

points along West Hill Road was discussed. Ms. Sandman shared an image from her phone from Monadnock Berries facing Bigelow Hill Road and indicated the general location of Bigelow Hill Road compared to Bigelow Hill. She said she spoke with Troy resident who said when his trees were lower, he could see all of Dort Street and Pelto's barn. She asked attendees who was responsible for assessing the Town's view tax. Selectman Hopkins said this was the responsibility of the Town's assessment company, Avitar. He also described the process for the Town of taking over Class VI roads that have been upgraded through a vote at Town Meeting.

Mr. Farkes oriented attendees to how the property would be accessed and developed. He said the property was last harvested in 2016, 2017 and 2020. He responded to a question about encountering bedrock during construction. Ledge was observed within the Class VI roadway. He explained that the piles for the panels would be "screwed" into most soil and gravel however for areas of ledge they would be "pre-drilled" and not pounded in. He explained the process of clearing the land and that there were no wetland impacts on this site.

There was a discussion about stormwater infrastructure and about the potential for selective clearing along the road.

Chairman Smith said the Planning Board will continue formal consideration of the applications next Wednesday and asked Mr. Coons and Mr. Huntoon for written notes about the proposed projects.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:13 a.m.

Respectfully Submitted,
Henry Underwood, Vice Chair