

South Hadley Fire District No. 2
Elmer Brook Subcommittee Meeting Minutes

Meeting Date: Wednesday, February 6, 2019

Meeting Time Start: 5:00 pm

-Attendance:

Jim Menard and Frank DeToma (arrived at 5:12) *Bill Sel Kirk*
-Others present: Tom Dennis, Bill DeLucca, Joanna Brown, Peter Gagne, Janice DeToma
The meeting was called to order by Jim Menard @ 5:05pm.

B. Selkirk moved to approve the minutes of the 1/16/19 meeting. Motion was approved.

In response to a question that had been posed by Joanna Brown at the January 16th meeting, J. Menard mentioned that he had learned that the fields under and around the solar panels in a farm are not sprayed with herbicide. Rather, they are mown. Mowing turns out to be cheaper than spraying herbicides, which requires professional workers and special protective equipment.

J. Menard invited comments and questions about the proposed development of the Elmer Brook land.

Joanna Brown pointed out that the town is well short of the ten percent affordable housing level that is suggested by the Commonwealth. We are at about 5 percent. Because we are below 10 percent, developers can construct high-density housing anywhere in town, by right. She further pointed out that there is a need for affordable housing for younger people, and for elderly people who would like to move into smaller homes. J. Menard responded that he would prefer that the District continue to own the land, after the lifetime of a solar farm. J. Brown suggested that there could be a lease arrangement for such a housing development, in which the District maintains ownership of the land. J. Menard expressed concern about the District's then having to take on the responsibilities of a landlord. J. Brown volunteered to look into such lease arrangements for the sub-committee.

J. Menard provided the sub-committee with more information about the Westfield solar farm, which he just had received from a Westfield administrator. It appears that revenues from such an installation are considerably higher than he had thought. He reported that he had also just obtained a copy of the contract for the development of the Westfield installation. A brief reading shows that the contract covers all sorts of details about the solar installation; it appears to have been written by people experienced in this area. J. Brown cautioned that any such contract should be carefully reviewed by several experts.

Bill DeLucca, Chair of the conservation Commission, raised several issues about any solar installation in that area. His commission is interested in preserving land near or on the mountain. The Commission will weigh in on any development in that area. If a solar farm were to be installed there, the Commission would want to review the remediation plan.

B. DeLucca also mentioned that his Commission is also interested in preserving Dry Brook Hill.

F. DeToma asked how that might be accomplished. Bill said that Anne Capra, in the Planning and Conservation Office, could be helpful.

Sub-committee decided to hold a walk-through of the Elmer Brook area for the abutters. It will be held at 10 AM on Saturday, February 23rd, at the entrance to the Elmer Brook area. Invitation letters will be sent out to them; the Water Department will do the mailing.

F. DeToma reported that he had received some cautionary information about solar farms, from Robert Pleasure. He promised to pass it on to other members of the sub-committee.

The next meeting was scheduled for February 23rd at 10 AM, for the walk-through.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:40 PM.

Respectively submitted,

F. DeToma
February 19, 2019

Anna Gagne