

*Approved as amended on Jan. 10, 2019*

**Plainfield Conservation Commission  
Minutes of Meeting Held November 28, 2018**

Meeting was held in Town Hall.

Commissioners present: Erik Burcroff, Jack Nelson, Alice Schertle, Judy Williams (Chair)  
Commissioner John Burns was absent.

Also present:

Michael Newhouse, Biologist and Environmental Scientist with Kleinfelder  
Robert Pytko, Property owner at 66 North Union, site of proposed solar facility  
Ed Stockman, Plainfield resident and former Conservation Commission Chair  
Mark Stinson, DEP Circuit Rider

**Call to Order**, Judy Williams, 7:07 P.M.

**Open Hearing for an Abbreviated Notice of Resource Area Delineation (ANRAD)**

The ANRAD was submitted by Marvel Solar, LLC for Robert Pytko and Whitney Shepperd in preparation for a proposed solar facility at 66 North Union. Michael Newhouse brought an updated version of the ANRAD and Kleinfelder Wetland Delineation Report which had been amended to correct inaccuracies or omissions pointed out by Mark Stinson. The issues addressed included the 100-foot buffer zone for banks, which had been omitted in the original report. Michael said a potential vernal pool was identified as a pond when Kleinfelder detected no signs of egg clusters or amphibious life during their examination in May. Some omitted wetland plants such as Eastern Hemlock were added in the amended version of the report. Judy informed Michael Newhouse that the Conservation Commission has arranged a peer review under MGL c. 44, section 53g, to be conducted by John Furman of VHB. Michael hopes to get the design work and third-party review completed this winter so that construction work can begin in the spring. Weather/snow conditions may make this difficult.

Erik asked that Michael provide five complete hard copies of the ANRAD and Wetland Delineation Report so that all commissioners have access to the materials.

There will be no Forest Cutting Plan. The change of use to solar puts the project under the authority of the Conservation Commission.

Judy read a letter from abutter Jerry Hopkins in support of the solar project.

Much necessary information is yet to be obtained, including the number of trees to be cut, the peer review results, and a site visit by the ConCom. Since the ConCom does not meet in December *the hearing to consider this ANRAD was continued to Wednesday, January 30, 2019 at 7:00 P.M. in Town Hall.*

The Commission and Robert Pytko shared stories about Bill Carver, a legend in Plainfield and Robert's grandfather.

Michael Newhouse, Robert Pytko, and Ed Stockman left the meeting at 7:35 P.M.

A discussion followed of the conflict between efforts to reduce our carbon footprint with solar energy and the eradication of forests for solar arrays with the resultant loss of carbon sequestration. Mark said companies from all around the country are seeking to initiate solar projects in Western MA with a potentially alarming loss of forested area. He said that farmers, understandably eager to make agricultural land pay, often sell or lease forested land and less productive fields for solar development. Low-producing fields are often wet and include jurisdictional areas. Mark said DEP will not allow any disturbance including placement of panels in Riverfront or Bordering Vegetated Wetland, and that DEP also opposes any disturbance including placement of panels in Buffer Zone. It was pointed out that Plainfield has no solar bylaw particular to the Wetlands Protection Act.

Mark Stinson left the meeting at 7:55 P.M.

**Minutes** of October 31, 2018 were read and amended to state that planned clear-cutting on the Guyette property would extend right up to the stream bank. Erik moved and Jack seconded that the minutes be approved as amended. Unanimous in favor.

Erik requested that future minutes use the term “cannabis” instead of “marijuana” as the word “marijuana” has often been used with offensive and racist implications.

### **Guyette Cutting Plan Central & Gloyd**

Judy reported on a walk taken on the Guyette property with Joan Walsh of Mass Audubon and William Sloan Anderson, property manager for Franklin Land Trust. Joan, a bird expert, described the clear-cutting plan with which they hope to create habitat for certain birds. An abutter to the property was present who expressed strong objections to the cutting project. Judy, Erik, John and Jack, who took part in the site visit to the property, told William Anderson that an NOI would be required.

Erik and Jack expressed opposition to the project because of clear-cutting right up to the stream and the attendant loss of carbon sequestration from so many trees. Erik pointed out that cutting would include some very old trees which sequester even more carbon than younger trees.

### **Nexamp Solar Project, 29 Union**

Erik, Jack, John and Judy made a site visit to the Nexamp solar project and reported that drainage, even after repeated rainstorms, appears to have worked well. Some of the seeded grass is growing. Jeff McDonald, Nexamp Construction Supervisor, said seeding would be completed first thing in the Spring. The facility is not yet fired up and running. Judy read a report on the Nexamp site from Kelley Fike.

### **Other Business**

Erik dampened some spirits with a report that Plainfield’s average annual rainfall of 46 inches is this year in the mid-70s with more reported on the way.

Jack recommended a series of videos on tickology, as reported in Mark Stinson's newsletter this month.

A leaf and stem sample brought by Jack for identification was the subject of conjecture but remained a mystery. John Burns had thought it might be buckthorn.

Judy read a list of wetland plants. Jack pointed out that there are two sub-species of red maple, one of which is a wetland plant and the other not.

There will be no Conservation Commission meeting in December barring the submission of an RDA or NOI or other event requiring immediate attention.

**The next meeting will be on Wednesday, January 30, 2019 at 7:00 P.M. in Town Hall** at which time the ANRAD hearing continued tonight will be resumed.

**Adjourned**, 8:55 P.M.

Happy Holidays!

Respectfully submitted,

Alice Schertle