

State of Rhode Island

County of Washington

In Hopkinton on the ninth day of December 2019 A.D. the said meeting was called to order by Town Council President Frank Landolfi at 7:00 P.M. at the Chariho Middle School Auditorium, 455B Switch Road, Wood River Jct., RI 02898.

PRESENT: Frank Landolfi, Scott Bill Hirst, Barbara Capalbo, Sharon Davis; Town Solicitor Sean Clough; Town Manager William McGarry; Town Clerk Elizabeth Cook-Martin. Absent: Sylvia Thompson.

The meeting was called to order with a moment of silent meditation and a salute to the Flag.

HEARING

The Council resumed the hearing on a request for an amendment to the Hopkinton Comprehensive Plan Future Land Use Map and an amendment to the Hopkinton Zoning Ordinance filed by Centrica Business Solutions, 1484 Candlewood Road – Suite T-W, Hanover, MD 21076 and Karen M. & James W. Cherenzia, Jr., 201 Chase Hill Road, Ashaway, RI 02804 for property located at Chase Hill Road as Plat 2, Lot 32, an RFR-80 Zone continued from November 25, 2019. The applicants propose to construct a 2.7± MW DC ground-mounted solar installation on 12.89± acres of property on Assessor's Plat 2, Lot 32. The proposal to utilize the property will require approval of the proposed Comprehensive Plan Future Land Use Map Amendment from Low-Density Residential to Commercial and a Zoning Map Amendment from RFR-80 to Commercial.

The applicants Karen & James Cherenzia were present. A stenographer was present to record the proceedings. A copy of the transcript will be attached and made part of this record.

Council discussion:

Council President Landolfi stated that he and Solicitor McAllister had received an email from Attorney Surdut, who indicated that he did not have any additional witnesses who would be testifying tonight, so this meeting would basically be for

public comment. Councilor Hirst advised Mr. Cherenzia that the residents of Hopkinton did not want to see anymore large solar projects and he asked Mr. Cherenzia if he would be willing to consider decreasing the size of this project to three acres or less. Mr. Cherenzia was sworn in and responded that he wished to wait for his attorney before answering any questions. Attorney Surdut arrived at 7:14 PM.

Public comment:

Clifford Heil of 211 Chase Hill Road read a letter he had written, and which had been signed by numerous abutters, concerning the adverse effect this project would have on the abutters. Councilor Hirst asked Mr. Heil how he would feel if the size of this project was reduced to three acres or three percent. Mr. Bibler objected to this question. Mr. Heil believed that three acres would certainly be better than the current proposal of twelve acres; however, it would have to be completely out of sight or the abutters' property values will be adversely affected. He stated, since Hopkinton is already at 90% of the town's usage, that he did not believe any more residential property should be rezoned to allow for solar. Nikki Ann Grills Scott of 187 Chase Hill Road indicated that she had previously written a letter to the Councilors in opposition of this project and she reiterated her beliefs. Stephen Scott of 187 Chase Hill Road also spoke in opposition to a zone change for this property. Rogean Makowski indicated that she was the sister-in-law of Ted Dionne who lives at 199A Chase Hill Road. She advised that Mr. Dionne was unable to attend the meeting due to some severe health issues he is having, some of which she blamed on his concern about the solar application. She stated that Mr. Dionne vehemently objects to this project due to the rural character of the community along Chase Hill Road. John Makowski indicated that Mr. Dionne asked that he speak on his behalf and he was 100% against this solar project proceeding and solar doesn't belong in a residential zone. Joe Moreau of Old Depot Road stated that this property would become a split zone if this application was approved and he spoke of his friend, Ted Dionne, and the effects that the stress is having on him. Marnie McNamara felt all of these solar projects were happening too fast and were adversely affecting the climate, the habitat and the people. Michael Grills of 135 Chase Hill Road spoke of meeting

Mr. Dionne when he was 7 years old and of being a steward of the land. Mr. Grills also indicated that he did have a talk with Jim Cherenzia and he had told him then, that he was against this project. Dina Grills Petrosky of 115 Oak Street stated that she is opposed to the requested zone changes. Luther Davis of 100 Cedarwood Lane indicated that at the last meeting an outside expert was brought in by the developer to present information regarding the effect of solar projects on home values which he stated have no negative effect but actually increases home values. One of the projects they used to attest to this statement was a project in South Kingstown. Mr. Davis stated that he tried to find the solar farm off of Kenyon Way, which turns into a dirt track, but never found it and if it is there it is not readily visible. He also noted that from Kenyon Way there was no visible evidence of South Shores which was the housing complex quoted by the expert as being here in Rhode Island. He did visit South Shores Village which is a 55 plus condo community of what appears to be manufactured homes ranging from 1,400 to 2,000 square feet, in the process of being built. Buyers of these homes have no idea if there is a solar project going to be constructed. He stated what bothers him is that homeowners are asked to take the opinion of a developer's expert and at the same time few proofs are available that actually show what an existing RI home's value or sale price was before it became the neighbor of a solar farm and its value or sale price after. He wished for an independent study of this issue which he believed would not cost a lot of money. Eric Bibler of Woodville Road spoke about Ted Dionne who had purchased his property in 1966. He also spoke about Emily Shumchenia and Clifford Heil who recently purchased their home on Chase Hill Road for its rural character. Mr. Bibler stated that he was surprised about Councilor Hirst's question about the three acre or 3%, for this would be a brand new proposal. Mr. Bibler asked why the applicant had not provided copies of their submittal for the abutting property owners' review after they stated that they would. Council President Landolfi asked Attorney Surdut why those submittals and plans were not provided. Attorney Surdut felt there was a discrepancy and believed those reports were on file at the Town Hall but he would be happy to submit additional copies. He indicated that he would resubmit at least three sets of all of their documents, as well as the additional documents that

the appraiser used in his presentation. Clifford Heil of 211 Chase Hill Road indicated that he had received a packet from the Clerk's Office but he thought the attorney had stated at the last meeting that they would be dropping off enough copies for the abutting property owners to review and they have not done that. Attorney Surdut indicated that he would send anyone electronic copies of their submittal if they provided him with their email addresses. Mr. Bibler indicated there were some discrepancies between the plans and the narrative. He indicated that the only decision the Council needed to make was whether or not the requested zone changes would be consistent with the comprehensive plan. The advisory opinion of the Planning Board should also be considered and they did not support the amendments based upon the lack of consistency with the comprehensive plan. Dick Noel of 39 Lisa Lane stated that he had gone to South Shore Village and asked about the proposed solar facility and was told that there was no intention of putting solar at that location. Rogean Makowski and Clifford Heil both spoke again about Ted Dionne and his love of the land and concern over this project. Joe Moreau asked to receive a copy of the video of the meeting, unedited due to Mr. Cherenzia's outburst, and also a copy of the police report from an incident that occurred regarding two residents of the town over the weekend. Steve Moffitt of Diamond Hill Road stated that the property is located entirely within a natural heritage area per the Rhode Island geographic information system and located in a primary protection zone per the Hopkinton GIS map 3 groundwater and wellhead protection. Council President Landolfi advised that in light of some of the abutters wishing to receive material regarding the project from the applicant's attorney via email and Councilor Capalbo wishing to hear from the mechanical connection expert, they would continue this hearing.

A MOTION WAS MADE BY COUNCILOR DAVIS AND SECONDED BY COUNCILOR CAPALBO TO CONTINUE THE HEARING TO JANUARY 13, 2020, 7:00 PM AT THE HOPKINTON TOWN HALL.

IN FAVOR: Landolfi, Hirst, Capalbo, Davis

OPPOSED: None

SO VOTED

ADJOURNMENT

A MOTION WAS MADE BY COUNCILOR CAPALBO AND SECONDED BY
COUNCILOR DAVIS TO ADJOURN.

SO VOTED

Elizabeth J. Cook-Martin

Town Clerk

Marita D. Murray

Deputy Town Clerk