

Public Hearing
April 5, 2017

A public hearing on a proposed local law amending the Town Zoning Law to require site plan approval prior to the construction of certain solar energy facilities in the Town held on Wednesday, April 5, 2017, in the board room of the Town Hall building was called to order by Supervisor Frederick J. Forbes, Sr., at 6:30 p.m.

PRESENT

Frederick J. Forbes, Sr., Supervisor
Larry R. Jones, Councilman
Michael R. Park, Councilman
Barry E. Warren, Councilman
Kevin M. Williams, Councilman
Patrick M. Snyder, Attorney for the Town
Anita W. Jebbett, Town Clerk

OTHERS PRESENT

Linda Jones, Cortland County Legislator
Gordon Wheelock, Cortland County Legislator
Eugene Wright, Chairman, Town of Homer Planning Board
Terre & Lee Dennis, residents, Village of Homer
Ward Dukelow, resident, Village of Homer
Don Fisher, Councilman, Town of Preble, and member of C-OFOKLA
Tarki Heath, President, C-OFOKLA
Kristin and Meredith, Syracuse University Environmental Finance Center
Donald Ferris, reporter, The Homer News
Brad Smith, reporter, WXHC
Nick Graziano, reporter, Cortland Standard

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Supervisor Forbes opened the public hearing on proposed Local law #1 of 2017, Solar Energy Systems. He said that the proposed law had been written by the Town of Homer Planning Board and Attorney Pat Snyder, and that the Town Board had made minor revisions to the law at the March board meeting.

Resident Ward Dukelow asked a question regarding the size of a solar energy project and lot sizes. Councilman Park explained that if the solar collectors cover an area greater than 3,000 square feet, it would be classified as a major solar collection system. The lot size itself is not regulated.

Supervisor Forbes said that since he has been absent for two months due to illness, he had questions concerning the proposed law - mainly whether or not there is any mechanism to authorize an exemption to the rule that prohibits solar farms from being built on prime farmland. He noted that solar companies do not want to install solar on land with over a 15% slope, something that could disqualify less desirable farmland from having solar installations.

Attorney Patrick Snyder said that the Planning Board had considered the best use of land in coming up with that proposed restriction, and that it was also included in model regulations the planning board was working with. However, he also pointed out that prime land could cover large areas, and some towns had chosen to allow building on prime farm land, when other reasonable alternatives were not available. In response to a question from Forbes, Snyder said that some minor modifications to the proposed law would not require another public hearing but they should be reviewed by the County Planning Department and/ or County Planning Board.

Snyder said that he has received preliminary comments from County Planning on the proposed law. Most of their recommendations would be taken care of if the new law is incorporated into the Town's current Zoning Law, something which Snyder intends to do. They have also suggested that there be site plan review for any residential solar system which is not located on a rooftop. The Town Board agreed with these changes and requested that they be incorporated and resubmitted to the County Planning Department.

The public hearing was closed at 6:45 p.m.

Anita W. Jebbett, Town Clerk