

**VILLAGE OF OLD BENNINGTON
PLANNING COMMISSION**

MINUTES
FOR
MONDAY, APRIL 08, 2019

Members present:

Robert Bullington, Chair; Suzanne Buchsbaum; Nancy Coseo; Galen Jones; Mary Pat Mazzola; Dennis McCarthy, Administrative Officer

Members absent:

None

State of Vermont Personnel:

Ms. Tracy Martin, State of Vermont Division of Historic Preservation; Ms. Mary Lou Chicote, Director Bennington Battle Monument

Community Members present:

Mr. Steven Anisman; Ms. Julie Anisman; Ms. Sheila Rys Schutz

The Village of Old Bennington Planning Commission was called to order by Chair Bullington at 7:15 PM.

Chair Bullington explained the format for the hearing. Ms. Martin would begin by addressing the permit application submitted to the Administrative Officer referencing an emergency generator and LP tank. The emergency generator will service the electrical needs of the Bennington Battle Monument. Following Ms. Martin, the Commissioners will ask questions of Ms. Martin should they have any? Following the Commissions questions the floor would be open to the members of the Community present for their questions.

Ms. Martin stated that the original elevator could be operated by a hand cable should the power go out. When the elevator was upgraded (installation of a new unit) the cable system was not an option. The option for emergencies was to install a battery system that would allow staff to get customers out of the Monument safely. The drawback of this system was that it could only raise the elevator in an electrical outage and then the customers needed to use the stairs to exit the Monument at the lower level. It turned out that this was not ideal from a safety or emotional practicality. This system was recommended by the State Buildings and Grounds Department with no professional engineering advice.

The LP fueled generator was professionally recommended by DuBois & King, Inc. Their recommendation came after researching the feasibility of placing different equipment in the basement of the Monument. There is a small trap door that is used to access the basement. The door is much too small for placing any large type of equipment through it. It was decided that an external device would be needed to solve the electrical outage problem.

Ms. Martin explained that the generator and LP tank would be placed behind the existing electrical transformer box (to the North). The Department placed stakes in the ground to show the location of the equipment. Many locations had been considered on the property for placing the equipment. This site was finally chosen as it gave direct access to the Monuments basement through an electrical conduit from the existing transformer. This site allows for no excavation of the parking lot or roadway because of the electrical conduit.

Ms. Martin stated that the decibel level would not exceed 85 decibels ten feet from the generator. She was adamant that a generator that exceeded the 85 decibels would not be allowed on the site.

Ms. Martin pointed out the projected operation of the generator system. The generator will run for a maintenance check once a week. The generator will run if there is a power failure and continue to operate until the power is restored. If the generator cannot be turned off for the off season and it should be activated due to a power failure a member of the maintenance staff would manually shutdown the unit until the power is restored. The goal is to have the generator activate only when there is a power failure or a need for a maintenance review.

When Ms. Martin finished her presentation the Commissioners asked their questions. The questions that were asked are as follows.

Questions:

^What other alternatives were researched beside the LP generator? Was the Tesla Firewall considered?

Answer: More batteries were considered but there was not sufficient room in the basement for them. No other alternative was considered.

^What is the maximum decibel level with or without the shroud?

Answer: The level will not be allowed to go above the 85 decibel level.

^Was any consideration given to place the generator in the basement of the Monument?

Answer: The trap door is not large enough to allow for placing the generator in the basement.

^Has the generator been chosen for this project?

Answer: We have not chosen a generator at this time. We have specified the limits of the equipment and will leave the determination of which generator will be used to the bidding process.

^How will the generator be operated (how often will it be tested, how long will that test last)?

Answer: The generator will test itself once a week and this test would last for 15 to 20 minutes.

^You stated that it may be possible to discontinue the use of the generator in the off season, can this actually take place?

Answer: We are investigating this possibility and we are waiting for the answer from the Fire and Safety Division.

Once the Commissioners were finished with their questions Ms. Sheila Rys Schutz, Mr. Steven Anisman and Ms. Julie Anisman asked their questions and voiced their concerns.

Questions:

^What assurance can be given that the new approach to the problem of electrical outages will solve the problem than the present arrangement?

Answer: The Department has hired a professional team that evaluated the problem and the requirements needed to solve the ongoing problem of electrical outage. When the battery solution was proposed it was not done with the knowledge of a professional engineer.

^How do you plan on landscaping/shielding the generator and LP tank?

Answer: We have funds that we can use to landscape the generator and the LP tank will be a buried tank. We are willing to discuss with the Community what works best in this location and what would be acceptable to the Commission.

^Is there a specific time that the generator must recycle?

Answer: We can have the generator recycle at any time. We could recycle it at midweek at noon if that is a preferred time.

Concerns:

^The Village Plan addresses the need to continue the Colonial look and this project does not address this section of the Village Plan.

^History of past endeavors with the State have not always had an ideal outcome with individuals living near the Monument. Will this project be different?

^If a generator is finally decided on but ends up being more than the 85 decibels and it gets installed what safeguards for the community are in place to correct this infraction?

^In 2015 the elevator and battery system were installed. We were lead to believe that this system would work. What assurances do we have that this proposed system will work?

^There is a concern that the Planning Commission, without the generator unit Buchsbaum being finalized will have a difficult time acting on the permit application.

The Commission thanked everyone for attending the hearing/public deliberation, and that they would now go into a deliberative session on the permit application.

Mr. Jones made the motion to go into the deliberative session; Ms. Coseo seconded the motion, all in favor, unanimous.

Ms. Mazzola made a motion to come out of deliberative session; Mr. Jones seconded the motion, all in favor, unanimous.

Ms. Buchsbaum moved to continue the deliberative session at the May 13, 2019 regular meeting; Ms. Mazzola seconded the motion, all in favor, unanimous.

Ms. Coseo moved to approve the minutes of the February 11, 2019 regular meeting; Ms. Buchsbaum seconded the motion, all in favor, unanimous.

Ms. Coseo moved to adjourn the meeting. Ms. Mazzola seconded the motion; all in favor, unanimous. Meeting adjourned at 9:30 PM.

Respectfully submitted:

Dennis C. McCarthy
Administrative Officer
04/12//2019