

Zoning Board of Adjustment  
Unapproved Meeting Minutes  
19 June 2024

**Board present:**

Peter Remy, Alan Bell, Nancy Ranson, Ernie Perham, John Harris

**Supporting staff:**

Kaelyn Willette, ZBA clerk

**Public Present:**

Rex James, Lucas Harrington, Lori Schreier, Paul Berch, Selena Gallen, and others

**Minutes**

6:59pm Chairman Remy opened the hearing for applicant Rex James to speak on behalf of Hubbard Farms LLC. Mr. James started discussing his application that was a variance to install 450 solar panels to match the electric demand at this Hubbard Farm location. The ground mount solar panels would be between the barns, not seen from the road. Lucas Harrington the director of operations at Hubbard Farm talked about the background of the project. Hubbard Farm wants to reduce their carbon footprint, they are always looking for new technology to expand their operations. Mr. Bell asked why they must have the solar panels on the ground compared to the roof. It is due to bio secure issues. Hubbard wants to discourage birds from flying over and the solar panels on the roof would create pockets for nesting. Snow is another concern if they are to put the solar panels on the roofs of the barns.

Chairman Remy asked if anyone had any questions or concerns. Mr. Berch was concerned about being able to see the solar panels. There was also discussion about how the solar panels would align in the masterplan goal in preserving the town character. Mr. Harrington discussed that the solar panels would not be seen from the road as they are going to be located between the barns. Lori Schrier was concerned about the impacts of the solar panels in accordance with the environment regarding what chemicals would be used to clean the solar panels, lighting pollution, solar glare, and noises. Mr. James responded and discussed her concerns. There are no chemicals needed to clean the solar panels, since the panels would be located in between the barns there is not going to be a glare, there will be no digging of the soil, there is no run off, and no additional lighting. The inverters hum and will be in an insulated building. Selena Gallen was concerned about the noise, Mr. James discussed that there should not be any additional noise.

Mr. James then discussed the 5 requirements for a variance.

1&2:

As the intention of the ordinance was to reduce size and visibility of a solar field so as not to visually diminish the bucolic setting of the area, or limit a more valuable and aesthetic use of the property area: these solar racks will be contained within the group of chicken barns in area unusable for any other purpose, including more barns. It will not be visible from abutting properties or the public road. These facilities are intentionally remote, and the addition of solar positively impacts the resiliency of the electric service along River Road by reducing strain on the grid and contributing to the local power supply, reducing loads at peak hours through battery storage.

3:

There is no harm to the public as this is a restricted commercial site and has no harmful by-products. There is very limited traffic to the site, only 4 people working at a time. No heavy equipment which would impact roads.

4:

There is no noise, light or air pollution created by the facility operation. Site is not visible from abutting properties or public roads. Neighboring properties will benefit from a minimal but an improved local electrical supply.

5:

Limited electrical supply prohibits growth. The amount of electricity that can be supplied to the farm with a single-phase line prevents Hubbard from being able to install the latest technological advancement. Improved methods for monitoring and adjusting the environment conditions of aviaries to optimize conditions for the birds in our care are being constantly developed. Hubbard cannot install many of these because the current electrical supply cannot handle the added demand. This results in less than ideal living conditions for our livestock which negatively impacts our competitive advantage and affects our ability to deliver premium quality breeding stock to our customers. The ability to generate our own solar powers make this a non-issue. Lack of reliability with the current electrical grid poses risks to our livestock. The overhead lines that supply life-sustaining power to the farm are extremely sensitive to storms which results in frequent power outages. This requires the farm to run a large, diesel-powered generator, sometimes for multiple days just to keep air, feed, and water flowing to the birds. In addition to creating a precarious animal welfare situation, the operation of the back-up generator is loud and releases exhaust into the air. Solar panels with battery storage would provide a clean and reliable back-up power alternative.

Mr. Berch was concerned about the power lines being able to support any extra power going through the lines. Eversource has already been asked and there should be no problem with any of the lines.

At 7:55pm Chairman Remy closed the public hearing portion and the members started reviewing the information given to them. Mr. Bell read RSA 672:1. III-A regarding solar energy.

At 8:20 Alan Bell moved to grant the proposed variance for 450 solar panels at property 973 River Road Westmoreland NH. Ernie Perham seconded the motion. The vote was 4 in favor of the motion and 1 against.

At 8:24 there was discussion about a clerical error in meeting minutes July 20, 2022 the minutes should have said 158.6' instead of 150. Nancy Ranson made the motion to accept the change of 150' to 158.6' in the meeting minutes for July 20, 2022. Alan Bell seconded the motion and the board unanimously agreed.

Nancy Ranson moved to accept the meeting minutes from March 20, 2024 Ernie Perham seconded the motion and the board unanimously agreed.

Nancy Ranson moved to accept the meeting minutes from May 15, 2024 with changes. John Harrison seconded the board unanimously agreed.

Nancy Ranson moved to adjourn the hearing Ernie Perham seconded and the board unanimously agreed, and the meeting concluded.