

PENNSBURY PLANNING COMMISSION MINUTES
MARCH 23, 2021

Chairman Dennis Smith called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m. in the Harris Room. Present were Dennis Smith, Lynn Luft, Corinne Murphy, Mike Clements, Jeff Streitl and Kathleen Howley. The minutes of February 23, 2021 meeting were approved as amended.

SOLAR ENERGY AMENDMENT – Discussion continued on an amendment to the solar energy ordinance. Mike Clements gave an overview of where the solar industry is today versus when our ordinance was adopted in 2012. Technology for solar panels has improved and methodology has changed. A discussion followed as to who would inspect installation of panels if a building permit is issued and does that person have the certifications properly inspect. The international building codes speaks to this and sets the criteria and guidelines for proper installation. Mr. Clements asked members what their goals are for amending the solar before turning over our draft to an expert to write it. Corinne Murphy stated that safety, visual acceptability and ease of the process for our residents are goals. A discussion followed as to how this might be achieved in the amendment.

Corinne Murphy stated that larger properties should have the opportunity to put solar in front yard under the CU process if they can prove it does not infringe on their neighbors. Most of the solar energy systems that power the property could come under a building permit and take it out of the CU process. Ground mounts and some roof mounts could stay in the CU process. For example, ground mounts less than 500 sf could be permitted within an acreage limit and meeting certain criteria to be determined with further research addressing setbacks, screening from adjacent properties, vegetation and removal of trees to fit the system. It was agreed that a glare study would not be necessary but include broad language to make the resident responsible for future issues. Solar panel installation within 100 ft of an historic structure shall continue to be reviewed by the Historic Commission.

There was also discussion on how surrounding townships handle solar energy. It was agreed that East Marlborough Township had language that members could agree with and this should be further researched. Corinne Murphy agreed to gather all information and draft guidelines which can be given to Kathleen Howley who will talk to Tom Oeste about drafting the ordinance language as well as Brandywine Conservancy and get back to members. Once ordinance language is drafted, it must be reviewed by the Planning Commission, revised as appropriate, and sent onto the County Planning Commission for their review as well as the Board of Supervisors. This could take up to 6 months.

Dennis Smith stated the township is in receipt of two subdivisions, Centerville School 750 Kennett Pike as well as the Lunger Subdivision. Matt Houtmann said the subdivisions are complete and township review may start. This will be on the next Planning Commission agenda for April 27, 2021.

With no further business the meeting adjourned at 8:10 p.m.

Respectfully submitted:

Kathleen Howley
Recording Secretary