
**TOWN OF WENTWORTH
TOWN COUNCIL MEETING
MINUTES
JUNE 7, 2011
7:00 P.M.**

The Wentworth Town Council held their regular monthly meeting in the Town Hall Council Chambers, on **Tuesday, June 7, 2011, at 7:00 p.m.**

Council members present: Mayor Robert Aswell, Mayor Pro Tem James Belcher, Councilwoman Iris Powell, Councilman Dennis Paschal, and Councilwoman Evelyn Conner

A quorum was present.

Staff Present: Brenda Ward, Town Administrator - Town Clerk, Yvonne Russell, Finance Officer, & Wentworth Deputy, Travis Loftis

Article I. **Mayor Aswell** called the June 7th, 2011, Wentworth Town Council Meeting to order.

Article II. **Mayor Pro Tem James Belcher** gave the **Invocation.**

Article III. **Discussion / Revisions / Adoption of Agenda**

A. Requests and Petitions of Citizens

Mayor Aswell advised that no one signed the **Speaker Register** and made a motion, "*that the Agenda stand as is.*"

Councilwoman Iris Powell seconded the motion. All voted in favor and the motion carried.

Article IV. **Approval of Town Council Meeting Minutes**

A. Town Council Meeting – May 3, 2011

Regarding approval of the Minutes, **Mayor Pro Tem Belcher** said he noticed in reading the minutes, that he made a motion to adjourn and, also, seconded the motion. He asked, "Can I get by with that?" **Mayor Pro Tem Belcher** noted, "I think it was Robert who seconded the motion."

The **Town Clerk** said she would make the correction to the Minutes.

Mayor Pro Tem Belcher made a motion, "*That the Minutes be approved with the change mentioned.*"

Mayor Aswell seconded the motion. There was no discussion. All voted in favor and the motion carried.

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Article V. OLD BUSINESS

Mayor Aswell advised, “There is no **Old Business** for discussion.”

Article VI. PUBLIC HEARINGS

A. Consideration of Revisions to the Town of Wentworth Planning and Zoning Ordinances:

1. Chapter 1, Definitions;

2. Chapter 2, Article VIII – A request to adopt revisions to *add Special use Permit Requirements for “Solar Energy Systems, Large Scale”*; to add definitions applicable to said use and to add use to the Table of Permitted Uses.

Mayor Aswell opened the Public Hearing, and asked **Ms. Frankie Legaux**, Assistant Director of Planning and Zoning for Rockingham County, to present the text amendment changes to Council.

Ms. Legaux began, “What is under consideration tonight, is an amendment to add a Special Use Permit to allow large-scale solar energy systems. This would be what you call a solar farm—a large-scale operation where they would actually be wholesaling electricity back to a company. It would not be the type...like you see on somebody’s house...that would require something different.”

“So, what we are looking to do, is put it in the Table of Permitted Uses as being allowed in Residential Agricultural, Light Industrial, and Heavy Industrial, by Special Use Permit.”

“As you can see, we are adding the definitions of what a large-scale solar energy system is, and what a solar panel would be. Then, we have added special requirements for them. One is that it would be approved by the Town Council, the minimum lot size would be ten acres, and this would allow the large-scale ground-mounted solar systems—the kind that would be mounted on the ground, usually a wood-panel type thing with solar panels on it.”

Ms. Legaux continued, “We have added height requirements and setbacks—a hundred feet from the property line is the setback, and a maximum of fifteen feet in height; however, some of them, we noted, went up to twenty-five feet, and that is determined by whether or not the panels are built to be stationery or to rotate to various angles of the sun.

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This would be dependent upon which one the applicant may apply for. Most of the time, the ones that are stationary do not go above fifteen feet; however, the ones that rotate, could go up to twenty-five feet. So, that would be allowed with the Special Use Permit, depending on what the Town Council thinks to be appropriate for that area.”

“Parking spaces—normally they only need one space because it would be for someone who comes to service the facility, make repairs, etc. and it would be large enough for a truck.”

“We have also listed requirements for the site plan the applicant would have to submit. They would be subject to watershed overlay, and it would need to be screened from the adjacent properties. The location of the buffer has to take into consideration any shading, because that could affect the effectiveness of the solar panel.”

“If this was near an airport, you would have to take into consideration the glare it may cause for planes landing, so we have put that in. If there is any outdoor lighting, we want it shielded onto the property, and it can be of sufficient intensity to insure security.”

Ms. Legaux added, “Any electrical wiring in the system shall be underground, that is, in a trench. Normally they have the panels and the wires go underground and come up to a large generating type system that the company would have. They are to be mounted onto a pole or rack, or suitable foundation, in accordance with whatever the manufacturer’s instructions are for that particular solar panel. The mounting structure shall be comprised of materials approved by the manufacturer, which are able to fully support the system components and withstand adverse weather conditions, such as heavy rains and so forth.”

“Multiple mounting structures shall be spaced apart at a distance recommended by the manufacturer, and that is to insure safety. They cannot be affixed to a block wall or fence. In other words, they have to have their own mounting facility.”

“They shall remain painted or finished, in the same color or finish that was originally applied by the manufacturer. Normally, these are gray or a green-gray to blend in with the environment, so we don’t want someone painting them another color. We want them to visually blend into the environment.”

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“Signs, *other than* the manufacturer’s or installer’s identification signs, appropriate warning signs, and the owner identification sign, will be prohibited. Not more than one manufacturer’s label, bonded or painted on the solar energy system, shall be permitted. In other words, we don’t want them to have signs on each one of them.”

“Also,” said **Ms. Legaux**, “we are making it the owner’s responsibility to remove obsolete or unused systems within 12 months of ceasing operation, and we want those components recycled if possible.”

“The Planning Administrator shall be provided with copies of any lease agreement, solar access easement, or plans for removal of the system or equipment. If it is interconnected with a local utility power grid, a copy of the conditional approval from the local utility must also be provided. We want to make sure that they have an agreement with the local utility from which they are going to buy the additional electricity. The other thing is, if they put it up on somebody else’s property, we also want a lease agreement there as well.”

“The reason we are talking about a solar access agreement is that some properties are accessed by easements and we want to make sure that the people who have granted that easement, understand that it will be used for something other than single-family homes, that there may be some truck traffic there.”

“We also say they have to meet all North Carolina building code requirements, and that would include the electrical connections. All their energy systems have to comply with the National Electrical Code, whatever the current edition is, and the owner assumes all risks associated with the system.”

“Any other conditions, you can add...not limited to buffering or noise control or anything like that...you or staff either one would be able to add conditions since it is a Special Use Permit.”

“On the screening,” asked **Councilman Paschal**, “it says, ‘any system shall be fully screened from adjoining properties and adjacent roads by a buffer yard. The location of this buffer yard must take shading into account so it does not affect the system’s efficiency.’ What if you get into an either-or situation, where you have to buffer it from the adjacent property, but it is going to shade the panels. Does that kill the project, or do they have to move it...”

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Ms. Legaux replied, “What your ordinance says, is that the most restrictive shall apply, so the most restrictive would be the buffer yard in this particular case. That is why we put ten acres in there, so they would have a buffer, but would have plenty of room to move that system out enough so as not to interfere with the buffer requirements.”

Councilwoman Powell asked, “Where is this going to be located...a solar farm?”

Ms. Legaux replied, “We have had people inquiring about it, and so have a number of other places, where these solar farms are going in. This is an attempt to set guidelines for a Special Use Permit, and if at some time, an applicant comes in, we would provide you with a map and the site specifics on that.”

Mayor Aswell asked if anyone else had questions for Ms. Legaux.

There were no further questions, and **Mayor Aswell** closed the Public Hearing and asked for a motion concerning the proposed text amendments.

Mayor Pro Tem Belcher made a motion, “*to approve the ordinance text amendment and adopt the statements of consistency as required by NCGS 160A-382(b) and 160A-383, and that the council’s action in adopting this text amendment is consistent with the adopted comprehensive plan according to the statements of consistency stated.*” (Note: See Attachment “A” for Statements of Consistency.)

Councilman Paschal seconded the motion. There was no further discussion. All voted in favor and the motion carried.

Article VI. PUBLIC HEARINGS - Continued

B. Submission / Adoption of Budget Ordinance for Fiscal Year 2011-2012

Mayor Aswell opened the Public Hearing for approval of the Town budget for Fiscal Year 2011-2012, and recognized Yvonne Russell, Finance Officer, who noted, “You were presented with the Budget Message, Budget Summary, and a line item spreadsheet in May, so the only thing left to do is adopt the Budget Ordinance.”

Councilman Paschal made a motion, “*That we adopt the Budget Ordinance for Fiscal Year 2011-2012.*”

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Councilwoman Conner seconded the motion. There was no further discussion. All voted in favor and the motion carried.

Mayor Aswell closed the Public Hearing on the budget and moved on to New Business.

Article VII. NEW BUSINESS

A. Consideration of Budget Amendment No. 3 for Fiscal Year 2010-2011

The **Finance Officer** referenced the memo in Council's packets, explaining, "This explains in detail the changes we are proposing, but basically what the amendment reflects is that we have received more revenues than we originally estimated, therefore we are able to reduce the amount of fund balance needed to balance the budget. The total amount budgeted for revenues and expenditures remains unchanged."

Mayor Pro Tem Belcher made a motion, "*That we accept Budget Amendment No. 3 for the Fiscal Year 2010-2011.*"

Councilwoman Powell seconded the motion. There was no discussion. All voted in favor and the motion carried.

B. Consideration of Contract with Rouse, Rouse, Penn & Rouse, LLP, to Audit Town of Wentworth Accounts

Mayor Aswell noted that the proposed audit fee totals \$6,865.00.

Councilman Paschal remarked, "Mr. Rouse has always done a good job for us, and I make a motion *that we approve the contract with Rouse, Rouse, Penn and Rouse.*"

Councilwoman Conner seconded the motion. There was no further discussion. All voted in favor and the motion carried.

Article VII. NEW BUSINESS – Continued

C. Consideration of Applicants for the Town of Wentworth Historic Preservation Committee

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- 1) **Robert (Bob) W. Carter, Jr.**
1141 Irvin Farm Road
Non-Resident
- 2) **Kay Hammock**
699 County Home Road
- 3) **Barbara T. Cooke**
136 Hearthstone Trail
- 4) **David Hoagland**
220 Timberwood Trace

Councilman Paschal made a motion, *“that we approve the applicants for the Town of Wentworth Historic Preservation Committee.”*

Councilwoman Conner seconded the motion. There was no discussion. All voted in favor and the motion carried.

Article VIII. PUBLIC COMMENTS *(There were no comments from anyone.)*

Article IX. ANNOUNCEMENTS

- **The Wentworth Planning Board will meet on Tuesday, June 21, 2011, at 7:00 p.m. in the Town Hall Council Chambers.**
- **The next regular meeting of the Wentworth Town Council will be held on Tuesday, July 5, 2011, at 7:00 p.m. in the Town Hall Council Chambers.**

ARTICLE X. A D J O U R N

Mayor Aswell made a motion, *“the meeting be adjourned.”*

Mayor Pro Tem Belcher seconded the motion. All were in favor.

Respectfully Submitted By: _____
Brenda Ward, Town Clerk

Approved By: _____
Robert P. Aswell, Mayor