



# City of Woonsocket, RI

## Planning Board Meeting Minutes

**Date/Time:** Tue, December 3, 2019 | 6 p.m.  
**Location:** Harris Hall (3<sup>rd</sup> Floor of City Hall)  
169 Main St, Woonsocket, RI 02895

I. Call to Order:

Chairman Finlay called the meeting to order at 6:02 PM.

II. Attendance Review

Planning Board Members Present:

1. Ken Finlay, Chairman
2. Roji Eappen, Vice Chairman
3. Ron Miller
4. Wendall Gardner

Planning Board Members Not Present:

1. Jon Pratt

Others in Attendance:

1. Kevin Proft, Administrative Officer/City Planner
2. Theresa Dunigan, Recording Secretary

Chairman Finlay welcomed Theresa Dunigan, the new Recording Secretary.

III. Correction/Approval of Minutes:

- a. Motion to APPROVE the November 5, 2019 meeting minutes: Member Miller  
Second: Member Gardner  
Discussion: Member Eappen – page 5, paragraph 5 switch “said” to “suggested”  
Vote: Passed 4-0-0 to approve amended minutes with the above change
- b. Motion to APPROVE the November 14, 2019 meeting minutes: Member Eappen  
Second: Member Gardner  
Discussion: None  
Vote: Passed 4-0-0

IV. Old Business

- a. Regulations

- i. **Amendment to Zoning Ordinance – Section 6.15 Solar & Wind Energy Systems, Facilities, and Installations** | The Planning Board will provide additional feedback to the City Planner regarding the above referenced draft amendment. A revised draft amendment will be reviewed at a future Planning Board meeting at which time the Planning Board may take official action to recommend the zoning amendment to the City Council.

The City Planner presented the latest version of the Zoning Ordinance after visiting several sites including a 6-megawatt array in Lincoln, RI and a rooftop array at the Department of Administration in Providence.

The City Planner proposed the following changes:

1. “Building Integrated” moved from level 1-A (least regulated) to 1-B (requiring review) to avoid unregulated unsightly installations on building sides or awnings.
2. Noting that 1-B accessory systems may provide energy to the building (net metering) or sell to the grid.
3. As discussed previously, 1-B ground-mounted solar arrays are now considered accessory structures so the area of the system is included in lot coverage calculations in residential settings.
4. 1-B ground-mounted arrays will not be allowed in C-2 with rooftop or canopy systems as the preferred option.
5. 1-B ground-mounted arrays in Industrial districts were increased from 1 to 2 acres to increase potential energy generation per site
6. Solar canopies over a parking lot won’t be counted toward maximum lot coverage.
7. Updated “Building Integrated” to “Façade Mounted” for a more accurate description (window tints, mounted flush with building) and kept out of C-1 or Residential districts. May expand in the future.
  - a. Chairman Finlay requested clarification of “Façade Mounted” arrays
  - b. The City Planner will provide pictures of different façade mount options for the next meeting.
8. Level 2 Ground Mounted – PR-1 and PR-2 can cover up to 50% of the land instead of 60%.
9. Level 3 Large Scale Commercial - Ground Mounted
  - a. PR-1 and PR-2 up to 50% of the land or a maximum of 6 acres (1.5 megawatts).
  - b. I-1 and I-2 can use up to 100% of the lot’s buildable area.
  - c. The City Planner will meet with a City Attorney to explore possibility of capping the total allowed on City land while avoiding discriminatory land use language.
10. Use Table Changes – solar canopies allowed by special use in more districts. Level 2 and 3 arrays prohibited in C-2 and MU-2 districts.

11. Language changed to accommodate concerns that some solar energy systems don't require connection studies.
12. Roof-mounted setbacks are regulated by the electrical code, not the City. Wording changed to reflect the electrical code's requirements.
13. In Industrial zones the setback requirement when adjacent to a residential zone is set at 25 feet for solar arrays even though it is greater for other uses.
  - a. The City Planner will ask the City Attorney about changing allowed setbacks if the Industrial zone is adjacent to a Residential zone and the possibility of shortening the setback due to the benign nature of solar arrays.
  - b. Chairman Finlay asked for clarification regarding where the setback measurements begin, the building or the property line. The City Planner said the property line in this case.
14. Maximum height of a roof-mounted panels limited to 3 feet instead of 6 feet. The City Planner does not foresee this creating a burden for the developers based on discussions with staff at OER.
15. Solar canopy heights - The City Planner will speak with a Warwick-area developer on Dec. 5<sup>th</sup> for feedback
16. Ground Mounted panels now have a maximum allowed height of 12' to avoid being blocked by snow and allow additional space for other uses (e.g. pollinators, grazing pasture...)
17. "Should" versus "Shall" wording for roof mounted array design - Member Eappen asked if the meaning will be understood by the readers, and the City Planner replied in the affirmative.
18. The City Planner will follow up with someone at the Office of Energy Resources regarding possible chemical drainage.
19. A line was added to limit the use of herbicides and pesticides, particularly in areas near the wetlands.
  - a. Member Miller was concerned it creates a requirement that cannot be policed by the Planning Board because of the members' lack of knowledge in this area.
  - b. The City Planner suggested adding a requirement that a landscape architect stamp the plans if pesticide or herbicide use is proposed.
  - c. Member Gardner will follow up regarding possible standard guidelines for herbicide/pesticide use by contractor companies.
20. Financial Security protocol for transfer of ownership - added the section stating the new owner/operator will need to provide a new financial guarantee to the City and that this process should be outlined in the decommissioning plan.

During a brief discussion on medium and large arrays, the City Planner said Woonsocket does have limited land so there is not room for larger arrays.

Chairman Finlay highlighted the Providence Street ballfield as a possible large array location that would create an eyesore at a key intersection.

The City Planner hopes to share this document with the City Council's Renewable Energy Subcommittee in the coming months as part of due diligence.

V. New Business

a. Other

- i. **Election of Planning Board Officers** | Due to the resignation of the Secretary of the Planning Board, an election will be held by the Board to ensure all Officer roles are filled.

The City Planner suggested a perfunctory vote in January to avoid an issue with the bylaws (requiring a yearly vote in January). Chairman Finlay explained the requirements for each open position – Secretary

Motion to NOMINATE Ron Miller for the position of Secretary: Member Eappen  
Second: Member Gardner

Discussion: Chairman Finlay called for any other nominations with no responses before starting roll call vote to approve Member Miller as Secretary.

Chairman Finaly	Yes
Vice-Chair Eappen	Yes
Member Miller	Yes
Member Gardner	Yes

Motion Passed	4-0-0
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- ii. **Establishment of an Annual Schedule of Meetings** | At its December board meeting, the Planning Board is tasked with establishing its schedule for Planning Board meetings in the upcoming year. The Board will consider the draft meeting schedule developed by the Administrative Officer and vote to approve it.

Chairman Finlay reviewed the deadline details for the proposed meeting schedule.

There was a brief discussion regarding the July meeting and a possible conflict with the July Fourth holiday. Independence Day (Observed) will be Friday, July 3<sup>rd</sup>. The City Planner suggested moving the July meeting to July 7<sup>th</sup> (the first Tuesday of the month). The members agreed this change is amenable.

The November meeting was moved due to the Presidential Election. Member Gardner will not be able to attend the November meeting at the proposed date of November 5<sup>th</sup>. After a brief discussion, the November meeting was moved to the second Tuesday of the month, November 10<sup>th</sup>.

The City Planner will amend the schedule to reflect this change and confirm the meeting locations for the new dates.

Motion by Secretary Miller to approve the 2020 Calendar as amended.

Second: Member Gardner

Discussion: None

Vote: Passed 4-0-0

VI. Administrative Officer's Report

a. Previously Approved Downtown Overlay District Guidelines

- i. The City Planner presented a copy of the October 2015 Downtown Overlay District Guideline to the members. He would like to see what other areas could use similar guidelines at a future date. Member Eappen requested the head of the Downtown Woonsocket Collaborative be made aware. The City Planner previously posted the Guideline on the City of Woonsocket website.

b. Previously Approved Subdivisions: Fairmount Street Solar, Singleton Street Solar, 1725 Mendon Rd, Manila Ave, 18 Oak Hill Ave

- i. The City Planner wrote a positive recommendation to the Zoning Board for the Fairmount Street Solar project which is seeking variances.
- ii. Singleton Street Solar is encroaching on the wetlands slightly. They submitted an application to DEM but still have not received a permit. They also are still working on a financial guarantee. The City Planner has been working with the Financial Department to finalize the financial guarantee.
- iii. The City Planner recorded Mike Drainville's decision regarding 1725 Mendon Road and sent it to Mr. Drainville. The City Planner is now waiting for Mr. Drainville's MYLAR for the land evidence record. The previously submitted Meets & Bounds document is out of date so the City Planner requested a new document be submitted.
- iv. Manila Avenue's MYLAR was recorded and sent to the Engineering Department before it was noticed the MYLAR was missing a land surveyor stamp. Manila Avenue is being cooperative and working to get the missing stamp.
- v. Casey Tenney's minor subdivision at 18 Oak Hill Avenue has been recorded and is complete.

c. Grants: Pre-Disaster Mitigation, Brownfield Assessment

- i. The Pre-Disaster Mitigation grant is from FEMA and RIEMA for stormwater management. The City Planner said these funds could be used to improve culverts in East Woonsocket near Mendon Road and Cass Avenue. There are approximately 5 culverts costing \$125,000-150,000 each. The grant is a 75% /

25% match. The Engineering Department is providing the information to the grant writer.

- ii. EPA Brownfields Grant - This is the \$300,000 EPA grant that was already received. Much of the funding will go toward 719 River Street with a few other locations also receiving funding. The City is currently interviewing contractors. Three contractors were chosen from the six submissions. Member Miller asked how close the contractors are to the \$300,000 cost. The City Planner explained the multi-phase plan. The \$300,000 will cover site assessment phases and some reuse planning for 719 River Street but that additional funding will be needed for remediation of the site.

VII. Next Meeting Dates:

Special Meeting: Monday, December 9, 2019 (Harris Hall)

Regular Meeting: Tuesday, January 7, 2020 (Harris Hall)

VIII. Adjournment

Motion to adjourn (7:42p.m.): Member Gardner

Second: Member Eappen

Discussion: None

Vote: Passed 4-0-0