

BRIDGEWATER TOWNSHIP PLANNING BOARD

Virtual Online Meeting

Tuesday, July 14, 2020

—MINUTES—

1. CALL MEETING TO ORDER:

Chairman Fross called the Virtual Online Planning Board Meeting to order at 7:00 pm

ANNOUNCEMENT: For the duration of the Corona virus Health Emergency, the Municipal Complex is closed to the public and meetings will be held digitally, connected by conferencing software provided by RingCentral.com. Members of the public are invited to view meetings live using RingCentral webinar, which also allows them to “raise a hand” and contribute when they are invited to do so during public portions of the meeting. Instructions for Virtual online meeting:

1. Download RingCentral meetings on preferred device: <https://www.ringcentral.com/apps/rc-meetings>
2. At the advertised start time of the meeting, enter: <https://webinar.ringcentral.com/j/1480527507> into your browser. **This method allows listening & participation.*

Please Note: You may also join via telephone: Dial: +1(213)2505700, Webinar ID: 1480527507 **telephone access allows only listening and not participation.* If you would like to make a comment, text 1(908) 912-4247 name, contact information and comment for the Board and it will read into the record.

2. OPEN PUBLIC MEETINGS ACT ANNOUNCEMENT:

Adequate notice of this Special meeting has been given in accordance with the Open Public Meetings Act N.J.S.A. 10:4-6. On June 16, 2020, proper notice was sent to the Courier Newspaper and the Star-Ledger and filed with the Clerk at the Township of Bridgewater and posted on the bulletin board in the Municipal Building. Please be aware of the Planning Board policy for public hearings: no new applications will be heard after 10:00 pm and no new testimony will be taken after 10:15 pm. Hearing Assistance is available upon request. Accommodation will be made for individuals with a disability, pursuant to the Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA), provided the individual with the disability provides 48 hours advance notice to the Planning Department Secretary before the public meeting.” However, if the individual should require special equipment or services, such as a CART transcriber, seven days advance notice, excluding weekends and holidays, may be necessary.

3. SALUTE TO FLAG:

4. ROLL CALL:

Michael Pappas – present	Councilman Kirsh - present
Henry Wang – present	Patricia Casamento - absent
Mayor Moench – absent	Beth Powers – present
Alan Fross – present	Maurizio Vescio - present
James Magura – present	Urvin Pandya – absent
Robert Giurlando - present	

Others present: Attorney Mark Peck, Esq., Planner Scarlett Doyle, PP, Engineer William Burr, IV, PE

5. APPROVAL OF BOARD MINUTES:

October 8, 2019, Regular Meeting (pending)	January 14, 2020, Reorg. & Regular Meeting (pending)
January 28, 2020 Regular Meeting (pending)	February 25, 2020 Regular Meeting (pending)
June 9, 2020 Virtual Online Meeting (pending)	June 23, 2020 Virtual Online Meeting (pending)
June 30, 2020 Special Virtual Meeting (pending)	

6. MEMORIALIZATION OF RESOLUTIONS:**NJ AMERICAN WATER CO – Sky Hill Road (pending)**

Block 601 Lot 107

#19-017-PB Conditional use and Site Plan

Motion for approval by Councilman Kirsh and second by Ms. Powers

AFFIRMATIVE: Mr. Pappas, Mr. Wang, Chairman Fross, Councilman Kirsh, Ms. Powers, Mr. Vescio, Mr. Magura, Mr. Giurlando,

ABSENT: Mayor Moench, Ms. Casamento, Mr. Pandya

NOT ELIGIBLE: None

PAWEL DABROWA-690 Foothill Road (pending)

Block 642 Lot 5

#19-021-PB Minor Subdivision

Motion for approval by Councilman Kirsh and second by Ms. Powers

AFFIRMATIVE: Mr. Pappas, Mr. Wang, Chairman Fross, Councilman Kirsh, Ms. Powers, Mr. Vescio, Mr. Magura,

ABSENT: Mayor Moench, Ms. Casamento, Mr. Pandya

NOT ELIGIBLE: Mr. Giurlando

NEW YORK SMSA LIMITED PARTNERSHIP D/B/A VERIZON WIRELESS – 551 Milltown Rd.

Block 168 Lots 18

#20-010-PB Preliminary and Final Major Site Plan

Motion for approval by Councilman Kirsh and second by Ms. Powers

AFFIRMATIVE: Mr. Wang, Chairman Fross, Councilman Kirsh, Ms. Powers, Mr. Vescio, Mr. Magura, Mr. Giurlando,

ABSENT: Mayor Moench, Ms. Casamento, Mr. Pandya

NOT ELIGIBLE: Mr. Pappas

7. LAND DEVELOPMENT APPLICATIONS:**PSE& G-Various Locations in Bridgewater**

Block MULTIPLE Lots MULTIPLE

#19-015-PB Preliminary & Final Site Plan Approval/Overhead electric transmission tower replacement project.

The Applicant, PSE&G, was represented by Counsel, Jennifer Carrillo-Perez, Esq. Ms. Perez described the subject property and its current uses. The application proposes the in-kind replacement of the existing 230kV transmission circuit, the removal of twenty-eight existing lattice transmission towers and the installation twenty-eight new Y-frame transmission monopoles along the existing PSE&G easement, particularly on easement lands of Block 903, Lot 3; Block 623, Lot 13; Block 622, Lot 35; Block 624, Lot 31; Block 624, Lot 17; Block 625, Lot 34; Block 625, Lot 32; Block 625, Lot 22; Block 483, Lot 20; Block 461, Lot 1; Block 461, Lot 41; Block 461, Lot 36; Block 426, Lot 35; Block 426, Lot 34; Block 426, Lot 13; Block 426.02, Lot 24; Block 418, Lot 7; Block 416, Lot 4; Block 416, Lot 5; Block 170, Lot 4.02; Block 173, Lot 2; Block 175, Lot 2; Block 175, Lot 1; Block 168, Lot 18; Block 168, Lot 23.16; and Block 166, Lot 1. The existing lattice towers were built in the 1930's, or earlier. The new monopoles are intended to provide resilient and reliable electric power service to Bridgewater and the surrounding area.

She noted that the existing transmission line, the Roseland-Pleasant Valley Transmission Line passes through Bridgewater Township on properties either owned by PSE&G, or along easements granted to PSE&G. The 150' wide transmission corridor runs in a northeasterly to southwesterly direction and is bounded by Bernards Township to the northeast and Branchburg Township to the southwest. She stated

that the Applicant, Public Service Electric & Gas Co., seeks a conditional use and preliminary and final major site plan approval, with related “c” variance relief. The following properties are in violation of the Zoning Ordinance:

Block	Lot	Zone	Bulk Variance Required	Proposed
903	3	R-50	Rear Yard	85 feet 63 feet
623	13	R-50	Front Yard	75 feet 34 feet
624	31	R-50	Front Yard	75 feet 59 feet
624	31	R-50	Side Yard	25 feet 0 feet
625	32	R-40	Side Yard	20 feet 19 feet
625	32	R-40	Rear Yard	75 feet 68 feet
461	1	R-40	Rear Yard	75 feet 61 feet
461	41	R-40	Rear Yard	75 feet 1.2 feet
426	34	R-40	Side Yard	20 feet 7 feet
426	34	R-40	Rear Yard	75 feet 68 feet
418	7	R-40	Front Yard	50 feet 45 feet
418	7	R-40	Side Yard	20 feet 8 feet
418	7	R-40	Rear Yard	75 feet 61 feet
416	4	R-40	Front Yard	50 feet 31 feet
416	4	R-40	Side Yard	20 feet 0 feet
416	5	R-40	Front Yard	50 feet 31 feet
416	5	R-40	Side Yard	20 feet 0 feet
170	4.02	C-3	Front Yard	100 feet 39 feet
175	2	R-40/ PURD	Rear Yard	24 feet 14 feet
168	18	P	Front Yard	50 feet 49 feet

The applicant seeks removal of twenty-eight (28) existing 230kV electric transmission lattice towers, and the installation of twenty-six (26) Y-frame monopoles and two (2) H-frame structures, and installation of new 230kV wires in accordance with several plans prepared by Joshua Fink, P.E., PSE&G Services Corporation, consisting of fifteen (15) sheets, with the last revision date of June 9, site plan exhibit prepared by Joshua Fink, P.E., PSE&G Services Corporation, consisting of twenty-one (21) sheets, with the last revision date of June 9, 2020; steep slope exhibit prepared by PSE&G Services Corporation, consisting of eleven (11) sheets, dated February 21, 2020; copies of all Right-of-Way deeds, restrictions, and covenants in the existing PSE&G easement corridor, in a packet dated September 29, 2019; environmental impact statement, prepared by Katherine L. Hering, P.E., P.P., DW Smith Associates, LLC, 1450 State Route 34, Wall Township, NJ 07753, dated September 2019; alternatives analysis addendum prepared by Katherine L. Hering, P.E., P.P. with analysis last revised October 2019; and a July 2, 2020 letter from Bradi Bartolomeo, Planner and project facilitator, also with PSE&G.

The Applicant presented testimony by the following witnesses, who were all sworn: Joseph DiBartolomeo, PSE&G Project Manager; John Wang, P.E.; Kyle King, electrical expert. Attorney Perez then presented her first witness, Mr. DiBartolomeo, who is the project manager for the RPV project; he manages costs and schedules and oversees associated departments involved in the project. He testified that the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission has determined that the existing transmission towers have reached the end of their useful life, as they are 90+ years. He testified that 25% of the existing towers need new foundations, 54% exceed the acceptable tower load, 85% of the towers are at 85-95% load or greater, and over 50% show weakening of the tower legs, which represents a loss of tower strength. The applicable PJM committees and subcommittees have recommended and approved the replacement project presented in the application.

Mr. DiBartolomeo testified that the Applicant seeks to replace the existing lattice towers with 26 Y and 2 H frame monopoles. He stated that these monopoles will be visible and present a more slender, compact profile. They will not present any other nuisance category. The RPV project is in two segments: (1) Roseland-Branchburg; and (2) Branchburg-Pleasant Valley. Approximately five (5) miles of this

transmission corridor are located in Bridgewater, and there are two subsections to this portion – north of the Readington transmission station and south of the Readington transmission station.

Mr. DiBartolomeo testified that work would commence in the Fall of 2020 on the northern subsection, with all work anticipated to be completed on this subsection by winter of 2021-22. Work on the southern subsection is anticipated to begin in the summer of 2022 and completed by late winter 2023. The construction sequence will be: construction of an access road along the Right-of-Way, suitable for loader trucks; then foundations will be installed, which requires use rebar cages for poured concrete, which then has to cure; the monopoles will then be installed, with cranes used for the tower installation, which of course will be visible; then the new lines and conductors will be installed on the monopoles, which will then be energized; then the current towers will be dismantled, which will involve the removal of the transmission wires, laying the towers in the ground, then cutting up and removal. Foundations will be removed to 6” below grade; in agricultural areas they will be removed to 3’ below grade to not interfere with farming operations. The construction will follow a linear sequence; construction at each specific site will take several months, but work will not be occurring on all sites at all times. The Applicant will take “before” and “after” photos and video of each site, and will restore each site to the same or better shape. The Applicant will have an outreach team for resident concerns regarding the project. The Applicant commits to repairs caused by the project, and will post a performance bond and an enhanced maintenance bond. The Applicant will work with the Township Engineer via regular meetings to review the project and its impacts on the roads and other Township infrastructure. They pledge to immediately repair hazardous conditions and will fully restore the roads and other municipal structures and areas at the end of the project.

The Board questioned Mr. DiBartolomeo regarding the towers’ ability to host cellular facilities. He testified that the towers were reinforced and designed to accommodate cellular equipment, but it was up to the cell carriers to decide location issues. It was noted that the tower will host the recently approved Verizon telecommunication facility, but will not be able to do so until spring of 2023. It was likewise noted that Verizon does not need to leave its current tower location until spring 2021. The Board also noted its significant concerns with the construction impacts to the Township roadways, as well as the Township ordinance requirement to interact with the Township Engineer and requirement to post a performance guarantee. Mr. DiBartolomeo testified that the Applicant will work with the Township Engineer in any capacity he wishes.

Mr. DiBartolomeo testified that a typical workday will not involve lighting, unless specifically required by the NJ Department of Transportation. The Applicant will otherwise abide by all Township regulations regarding work hours and conduct, If a situation arises, the applicant may request to work outside of the Township parameters as necessary and will work with the Township on such requests. Wire pulling will impact traffic. They will use slow-downs with police during the day, if permitted. Work at major roadways, such as I-287, will be done at night and will require the use of cranes and bucket trucks.

The Applicant will construct an access road along the entirety of the PSE&G Right-of-Way to facilitate construction. In upland areas, topsoil will be pulled away for gravel to make the roadway; in wetland areas Applicant will use timber mats, which will also be used for construction of the towers to mitigate against ground disturbance. Snow will be able to be plowed on the access road, both the gravel and timber mat sections.

The Board questioned the applicant regarding posting a cash bond in lieu of a performance bond, so that damage to Township roadways could be readily attended to. The Applicant acknowledged that it will follow all Township ordinances with regard to guarantees, and will execute an escrow agreement with the Township to fund any necessary repair work.

Chairman Fross opened the meeting so that the public would have the opportunity to ask questions of Mr. DiBartolomeo.

He was asked whether the towers presented a cancer risk. Mr. DiBartolomeo noted that no specific study had been done, but that the voltage would be the same as before, only mounted higher above the ground.

Mr. DiBartolomeo was asked if electric or internet service would be interrupted during construction. He testified that the electric service would not be disrupted, but could not speak to internet.

Mr. DiBartolomeo was asked if the towers would be located in the same spots. He advised that most of the towers will be in the same locations, but there will be some shifts.

Mr. DiBartolomeo was asked how tall the construction cranes will be, and how far they will be located from residences. Cranes will need to be 30'-40' taller than the tower they are working on. Terrain plays a role in the crane height, as does the weight of the structure being lifted. Smaller cranes will be used to construct foundations and set rebar; removal of the existing towers will require larger cranes; and construction of the new towers will require even taller cranes.

Mr. DiBartolomeo was then asked about restoration of the gravel road. When the road is constructed, a fabric liner will first be laid; then the topsoil will be scraped and stored elsewhere. At conclusion of construction, the road will be rolled up and the topsoil replaced, with ground reseeded. The Applicant will take photographs of the roadway prior to its construction for restoration purposes.

Attorney Perez then presented her next witness. Mr. Wang, who is the project engineering manager, responsible for the technical design of the project. Utilizing photosimulations, he described each site in the PSE&G Right-of-Way, as well as what is proposed, from the easternmost site to the westerly site. He testified that the utility line will follow the same centerline and will have the same voltage (230 KV). The towers will be wider on top and smaller at the base than what exists. The current tower bases are either 40' x 40' or 60' x 60', whereas the new towers will have bases of 8'-14' in diameter. The existing concrete foundations will be removed - the Applicant will cut the foundation to 6" below grade (3' for agricultural land). The existing towers have a height between 72' - 175', with an average height of 102'; the proposed Y frame towers will be 113' - 173' high, with an average of 137'. There will be 38' face to face clearance. The height increase is driven by code and design standards that have evolved since the original towers were constructed (there was no code when the towers were originally built). The towers will be built slightly offset from the existing, which will allow for laying of foundations and construction, and will minimize disruption.

Mr. Wang reviewed Board Engineer Burr's February 9, 2020 memorandum. He testified that 28 total towers are being replaced. 26 will be Y frame, and 2 H frame. The H frames have 2 legs as opposed to 1 leg for the Y, and are heavier. They will be located at each side of the Readington substation. There is no need for any additional easement or rights-of-way, but there is one location that will be accessed out of the existing Right-of-Way - there is an existing access agreement with the landowner in this instance. If grading is necessary, no property owner will be affected; the line will present less of an impact than what is presently there. Work hours will be as detailed in the Board Planner's June 22, 2020 memorandum. He reiterated that the Applicant would work with the Township Engineer regarding impacts to and repair of Township roads. No lighting, including FAA lights, is contemplated by the application.

Chairman Fross opened the meeting to the public so that members would have the opportunity to question Mr. Wang.

Mr. Wang was asked by a member of the public why the Applicant was raising the height of the transmission line rather than burying it. Mr. Wang testified that the voltage was such that it was impractical to bury, as it would require considerable insulation, whereas the air insulates the line. He was also asked what the standards dictate relative to the towers, and replied that the Applicant must comply with the National Electrical Safety Code, which sets minimum safety requirements.

Attorney Perez then offered her next witness. Mr. King, President of K&R Consulting, who presented his qualifications and was accepted by the Board as an expert in the field of electrical engineering and testified as to height and health concerns. He explained that electrical fields are caused by voltage, and magnetic fields by current. Together these create electromagnetic frequency (EMF). There is no Federal or State regulation of magnetic fields. The transmission line will generate very low, almost negligible magnetic fields. He testified that the amount was that emitted from the wiring in a typical home.

Chairman Fross opened the meeting so that the public would have the opportunity to question Mr. King. No member of the public availed themselves of the opportunity.

Due to the lateness of the hour, the public hearing was carried to July 28, 2020, with no further notice required.

8. MEETING OPEN TO THE PUBLIC:

Members of the public wishing to address the Board on any matter not listed on the agenda may do so at this time. Please note that in accordance with the Municipal Land Use Law and Case Law, any questions or comments about a pending application must be made in the hearing on that specific application.

There were no members of the public who wished to address the Planning Board.

9. OTHER BOARD BUSINESS:

None

10. EXECUTIVE SESSION:

None

11. ADJOURNMENT:

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 10:30 pm