



EAST PROVIDENCE WATERFRONT DISTRICT COMMISSION

Design Review Committee Hearing Minutes February 20, 2020

Attendees: Luis Torrado, Chair
Tim Conley
David O'Connell
James Moran, Planning Department
Steve Coutu, DPW

Members absent: David Sluter

Staff: Pamela M. Sherrill, Executive Director
Chris Martin, Waterfront Planner
Sara Bradford, Bradford Associates

Prior to opening the Design Review Committee Hearing, Mr. Fazioli, Waterfront Commission chair, gave an overview of the process of the three hearings. The Design Review Committee (DRC) and Hearing Panel will give advisory opinions or recommendations to the WC for their vote. He established for the record that quorum is present for all three groups.

The DRC chair, Luis Torrado, called the hearing to order at 6:35 PM and confirmed quorum with a roll call.

A. Old Business

1. Unanimous vote to approve the DRC minutes of July 18, 2019 was motioned by Mr. Conley and seconded by Mr. Coutu.

B. New Business

1. **VOTE:** Public hearing to send an advisory opinion to the Waterfront Commission for a proposed 2,807 kilowatt direct current solar array system with installation on a 9.3-acre site which is undergoing active environmental remediation.

Project:	Kearsarge Solar Facility
Owner:	Arpad J. Merva Revocable Living Trust
Applicant:	Kearsarge Solar, LLC
Location:	0, 7, and 105 Dexter Road
Assessor's:	Map 204, Block 01, Lots 17, 17.1 and 18
Zoning:	Dexter Road Sub-District

Christine Engustian, representing Kearsarge LLC with respect to the proposal before the Commission, gave an overview of the project and confirmed the documents that have been submitted as the application package and confirmed the notice of hearing that was sent to property abutters within 200 foot radius of the subject parcels. Andrew Bernstein of Kearsarge Solar, LLC and Todd Green of GZA as witnesses, were sworn in.

Ms. Engustian asked that the DRC accepted the Waterfront Commission Executive Director's Memo, Glen Fontecchio's Architect Memo and Bradford Associate's Landscape Architect Memo be submitted



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to the record. So moved by Mr. Conley, seconded by Mr. O'Connell and voted unanimously. Ms. Engustian requested that the development application with all supporting documentation of plans, reports and the like, whether submitted with the written application to the Waterfront Commission or at a later date, be admitted into evidence as the applicant's full Exhibit 1. So moved by Mr. Conley, seconded by Mr. O'Connell and voted unanimously.

Andrew Bernstein, authorized representative of Kearsarge Solar LLC, describes his education and company background and qualifications and submits his professional background profile for the record. The applicant requests a motion of the profile to be admitted to the record as Exhibit 2. Motion to accept Exhibit 2 into the record by James Moran, Mr. O'Connell seconds and voted unanimously. Mr. Bernstein indicated that Kearsarge specializes in siting solar facilities on brownfields that are undergoing remediation. Energy generated will be transmitted to National Grid through Rhode Island's net metering program and will benefit schools and other public entities. Mr. Bernstein confirmed that solar panels are built to hurricane code for the area at 150mph and ensures the panels are durable and safe.

Mr. Bernstein spoke to the positive fiscal impact tied for the project: \$1.3m in new wages; \$196k in local grid improvements; personal property taxes over the life of the project will total \$280k; \$1.2m in operations and maintenance wages over the life of the project (25 years). RI Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (RIPDES) permit will be required prior to construction. Construction would start in June or July of 2020, take 3-3.5 months to build with connection to National Grid anticipated at end of summer. Facility would be operational August/ September 2020. The lease is for 25 years. The facility size is limited to the 2,807 kilowatt direct current capacity established with National Grid. The applicant agrees to submit a decommissioning estimate plan and surety bond to be approved by the Waterfront Commission Executive Director and the City of East Providence Solicitor.

Ms. Engustian called Todd Greene, P.E. of GZA Environmental, Inc. as the second witness. Ms. Engustian requested a motion to submit Mr. Greene's resume to be admitted as Exhibit 3. Motion to approve Exhibit 3 by Mr. O'Connell, seconded by Mr. Conley and voted unanimously. Ms. Engustian requested a motion to present Mr. Greene as an expert in civil and environmental engineering. So moved by Mr. Conley, seconded by Mr. O'Connell and voted unanimously. Mr. Greene gives a background on the 9.3-acre site and describes the main aspects of the proposal on three lots including a grass and dirt open field, a railroad spur and a 16,000 sq ft building (which will be demolished) and associated parking with perimeter security fencing. The proposed project with the solar array system will cover the majority of the lots and implemented in a manner that is supported by the current conditions and ongoing soil vapor extraction and product recovery remediation system on Lot 17. Lot 17.1 and 18 do not have active remediation systems, but the applicant is working with DEM to cap portions of the land in accordance with a proposed Environmental Land Use Restriction (ELUR). Fencing is proposed along the rail corridor. A minimum 20' setback is proposed for emergency access and access to the remedial system. Solar panels will be angled at 20-25 degrees and the max height is at 8-9' with a min height off ground of 3'. One transformer pad and five new utility poles will provide interconnection to National Grid. Stormwater management conditions will remain the same. The perimeter and cleared slope will be loamed and seeded. A RIPDES permit for temporary erosion controls will be required prior to construction. The site will not be connected to public water/ sewer and no lighting will be added. A landscaping plan has been addressed and Ms. Bradford's



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recommendations will be implemented. Safety signage will be posted and one security camera monitored will be installed and monitored by Kearsarge. Mr. Greene addressed the City Engineer/ City Fire Captain's memos.

DRC members asks if the applicant is doing anything new or different on this location vs other projects. The applicant answers that this will be similar to their other projects, and will not be changing anything. They have done some waterfront installation in Massachusetts and see no increased issue with waterfront installation.

There were no public comments. On a motion by Mr. Conley and seconded by Mr. Coutu, the DRC voted to close the hearing. All in favor.

Mr. O'Connell made a motion to send a positive advisory opinion to the Waterfront Commission for a proposed 2,807 kilowatt direct current solar array system with installation on a 9.3-acre site which is undergoing active environmental remediation, as indicated in Kearsarge Solar LLC's application, February 6, 2020 narrative, and plan set received January 30, 2020, based on comments from City staff, the Planner's Memorandum, the Commission's landscape architectural consultant, the Applicant's testimony and public testimony. The project is in conformance with the reviewing criteria set forth in Section 19-477 of the East Providence Zoning Ordinance and the purposes of Article IX, "Waterfront Special Development Districts" regulations of the East Providence Zoning Ordinance. The DRC recommends Waterfront Commission approval, subject to the following conditions:

- A. The final landscape plan shall be approved by Bradford Associates, landscape architectural consultant.
- B. The existing chain link fence from the railroad crossing north to the property corner along Dexter Road shall be replaced with a gate of sufficient width to accommodate smaller emergency vehicles.
- C. The applicant shall provide a one-year guarantee on planted specimens to assure survival through the first growing season.
- D. Educational signage shall be installed demonstrating the environmental benefit of the solar installation.

Motion was seconded by Mr. Conley and voted 5-0:

Mr. O'Connell – Aye	Mr. Coutu – Aye	Mr. Moran – Aye
Chair - Aye	Mr. Conley -- Aye	

- 2. VOTE:** On a motion by Mr. Conley, seconded by Mr. O'Connell, the Design Review Committee voted unanimously to close and adjourn the public hearing at 7:24 PM. All in favor.

Respectfully submitted,

CHRIS MARTIN, *Waterfront Planner*