

**APPROVED**  
**Town of Fitzwilliam**  
**Planning Board Meeting**  
**May 3, 2016**

**Members Present:** Terry Silverman, Robin Blais, Paul Haynes, Matt Buonomano, Suzanne Gray, and Nancy Carney, Selectman's Representative.

**Others Present:** Eversource team, Tracy Tarr, GZA, Matthew Robinson, Landworks, Laurel Boivin, Bonnie Kurylo, Joe Purington, Chris Allwarden, Jim Jiottis, and Ian Brewe (covering for Chris Howell); Dana and Cheryl Pinney, Attorney Jason Reimers, Robert Ford.

**Call to Order:** 7:00 PM

**7:00 PM Public Hearing continued. Eversource (PSNH)** application for a conditional use permit for proposed wetland impacts within the Wetlands Protection Overlay District, Fitzwilliam ordinance Section 127-16.1, D.4., to co-locate the new Q166 transmission line with an existing line and install poles in a utility corridor; and associated application for a site plan review of this corridor and existing substation, including a sound study report and landscaping plan.

Mr. Jiottis described progress to date on the sound wall design, which he called 'a good collaborative effort.' He provided a PowerPoint refresher on the Q166 line project, which he described as a reinforcement of the Eversource electrical infrastructure to ensure an adequate and reliable energy supply. He said the grid does not meet thermal and voltage planning criteria and if not addressed could lead to power outages. He said Eversource was the only provider to step up with a solution to this problem; the Q166 line, a 2.5 mile, 115 kV line from Fitzwilliam to Troy substations. They are planning to be in service with this line by December 2016.

He noted that the project will be constructed in existing rights of way, using a monopole double circuit design, with the 115 kV and 345kV lines sharing a common structure. This is the option selected by the Planning Board, which was approved on March 17, 2015. He added that this design reduces clearing of additional ROW width and includes vegetative screening along sections of Route 12N and around the existing substation.

Mr. Jiottis reminded the Board of the proposed timeline for the project, noting that they will need a scheduled outage window so the outage work constructing the Q166 line and constructing the sound wall can be completed during the scheduled outage between September 1st and October 16<sup>th</sup>. Preparation work for the sound wall and Q166 line will be done between now and September 1<sup>st</sup>. This schedule depends on signing the Memorandum of Understanding between Eversource and the Planning Board, and on Planning Board approval of the conditional use permit and the site plan. The timeline outlines the various steps between now and October 16<sup>th</sup>.

Gray clarified that the sound wall cannot be constructed without a scheduled outage. Mr. Jiottis agreed, saying that if the outage window is missed, they will "go to the end of the line." The outage is scheduled between September 2<sup>nd</sup> and October 13<sup>th</sup>. Silverman asked about the use of smart grid technology. Mr. Jiottis responded that it is in use, allowing Eversource to shift loads. He added that the electric loads are lighter in the fall.

Mr. Jiottis said they hoped to complete and sign the memorandum of understanding this month.

Silverman said that Mr. Coate hasn't really been involved in the design of the sound wall, adding that his is really a review position. He said that Mr. Coate had received files that he could not open for review. Mr. Brewe said he had redone the file and had sent it to Mr. Coate already.

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Dana Pinney noted there had been outage issues in the past. Mr. Jiottis said scheduled outages allow them to do work without jeopardizing power supply.

Tracy Tarr, GZA wetlands engineer, thanked the Board for working with Eversource since their first application in September 2014. They have met with the Planning Board, the Conservation Commission and the Board of Selectmen, a total of 19 meetings in all. They submitted an application for a conditional use permit in September 2014 and the Board selected option 3 for the Q166 line in June 2015. With the Board's input the revised plan resulted in saving 412 sf in the buffer area, 264 sf of wetlands area, and 180 sf of upland area. They got rid of the 379kV line towers and attempted to address all of the town's issues.

They got a wetlands permit from the state in July 2015, which expires in 2019. She added that GZA will do the oversight of the construction of the line.

Matt Robinson, Landworks, said he had been working closely with the sound engineers to develop various visual iterations of the proposed sound wall. He described three variations on color, describing how the wall will blend into the landscape without additional screening.

The wall will have a smooth surface, in a neutral color, a warm light gray or tan. Surrounding vegetation will give the wall texture, as will other foreground landscaping. Mr. Pinney asked about other techniques, including air brushing and camouflage, both of which Mr. Robinson said would work well for a wall that was closer to the road and not screened by existing trees. Mr. Pinney asked about a berm with vegetation. Mr. Robinson said that is not a feasible option as it would be very hard to maintain. He said "that isn't going to happen."

Ian Brewé, a sound engineer covering for Chris Howell, who could not attend this meeting, described the wall as two sided, designed to manage geometry, absorption and transmission issues. Silverman asked for the specifications. The wall will be steel with high performance insulation. He said he and David Coate are working to establish the correct height of the wall to be most effective.

Gray asked about how much sound will be absorbed and Mr. Brewé said they will know and the wall will minimize sound reflection. The exterior face of the wall will be painted solid steel. Mr. Pinney asked about the quality of the wall and Mr. Brewé said it is "heavy duty," describing it as efficient and high performing. Mr. Pinney asked why it is a two sided wall and not a three sided wall, adding that his home is elevated in relation to the substation and the height of the wall is really important. He asked about a cantilevered wall and Mr. Brewé said both he and Chris Howell rejected that idea.

Mr. Jiottis reminded us that there are logistical considerations inside the substation, like the underground oil pan, electrical equipment above and three generators on the ground. Mr. Pinney asked about the 4<sup>th</sup> generator, since the wall is proposed to encompass the three in service generators. Mr. Jiottis said the fourth generator is a spare and will not be in service unless one of the existing generators is out of service.

Mr. Pinney asked if when additional equipment is added to the substation, the wall will be obsolete. He added that he wants the wall to work into the future. Mr. Brewé explained that the wall is designed for the three existing transformers. Mr. Jiottis said the town adopted a new noise ordinance, which Eversource will abide by.

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Mr. Pinney asked about adding sound panels to the concrete walls. Mr. Jiottis said they would have to look at that idea. Mr. Ford said it sounds reasonable, adding “run it by David Coate”. Silverman reported that the town has had complaints about construction noise at the substation, and wondered if they could put up portable sound panels for that. Mr. Jiottis said they had never done that but would consider it. Silverman said they will look forward to more detailed information on the sound wall design.

Attorney Allwarden discussed the MOU, distributing a summary of the points made, which he described as based on comments made at the last planning board meeting. He added that he had received comments from Robert Ford, David Coate and Mr. Pinney. He noted there are three key points; agreement on the sound wall design, landscaping, and permitting issues. He said they need to get permits and materials for constructing the Q166 line and for constructing the sound wall.

Referring to the draft MOU, Silverman noted that the Planning Board cannot tell another town board what to do. He added that the Planning Board’s action on this application will send the message to the other boards – saying the Board’s duties end in this room.

Blais asked about Eversource’s commitment to maintenance of the landscaping. She said she doesn’t see why, if Eversource is willing to maintain the landscaping on their property in perpetuity, they aren’t willing to maintain landscaping along old Route 12 in perpetuity. Since this road now belongs to the town, they would not have to request permission from abutters. Silverman added that the effect of the screening should be maintained and any damage or die-off should be re-established. He said he did not want another Planning Board in the future to have to deal with this problem. Attorney Allwarden agreed to add this to the MOU.

Silverman asked about applying the L90 standard employed in Massachusetts. Mr. Brews said they are basing their work on the new town noise ordinance. Silverman said L90 should be the standard for this unique project. It is a stricter standard than in NH and should be applied in this case. Pinney questioned why if they want the wall to work they would refuse to build to a stricter standard. Attorney Allwarden noted the MOU says the wall will substantially meet the standard in the town ordinance.

Mr. Ford asked if this a standard that will allow them to live with the noise? Attorney Allwarden said the town enacted the noise ordinance and we agreed to it, wondering why this is a problem. Blais noted that the last time PSNH said there would be “no noise.” Mr. Ford noted that standard was also in the PSNH October 2014 sound report. Attorney Allwarden said he wasn’t there then, but he is not sure the station can be made inaudible. Mr. Ford noted he lives ½ mile away and he can hear it.

Attorney Reimers asked if Eversource would commit to a standard of ‘inaudible’. Attorney Allwarden said they can put in the sound wall to bring the level down. Pinney reminded everyone that Chris Howell had said that there were a lot of things that could be done, but they were not cost effective, implying that Eversource was just not willing to do it. Mr. Brews commented “yes, feasibility issues.” Gray asked if this was David Coate’s best option or are there others.

Attorney Allwarden proposed he revise the MOU, taking into account all the comments he has received and comments made tonight, and will send it to the Board for review. Silverman proposed having it reviewed by Attorney Cunningham.

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Attorney Reimers said the MOU wasn't clear that Eversource is committed to fixing the sound problem, adding that a standard tonal threshold should be specified in the MOU. He said he's not sure what the standard should be, but it should be specific, with Mr. Coate's input. The sound should meet the standard and be monitored and if the standard is not being met it should be fixed.

Attorney Reimers added that if Eversource is allowed to construct the Q166 line without real protections in place, and the wall does not work once built, it may be too late to do anything. Silverman said these recommendations could be a part of the Planning Board's notice of decision.

Attorney Reimers said he hoped David Coate was a full member of the team, adding that it didn't sound to him like he was. Mr. Brewe said he rebuilt the model and sent it to Mr. Coate so he could open it. Carney said she hoped Mr. Coate could be at the next meeting on this topic. Silverman said the sound wall presentation at this meeting was premature in terms of Mr. Coate's input.

Mr. Pinney asked if sound walls deteriorated over the years. Mr. Brewe said there is a long life span on a wall, typically 20-30 years, and insulation is designed to stay in place and work well. Attorney Reimers said they may need to make it last longer. Mr. Ford said Eversource should commit to replace the wall if it loses effectiveness. Silverman said that could also be part of the notice of decision. Attorney Allwarden thought it was already in the MOU. He said there is one year of monitoring in the MOU.

Mr. Purington asked what the Board saw as the next steps regarding the Q166 line. Silverman said he'd like to see the next meeting in June. Mr. Purington said that tonight Eversource had demonstrated the progress they have made and the sound wall is a commitment. He hoped the Board recognized the urgency of the need to order construction materials for the Q166 line and the sound wall before the scheduled outage when they will begin the construction. He added that they are serious and want approval for the Q166 line and the sound wall.

Silverman said the Board would discuss a way to move forward. Silverman moved, Blais seconded and the Board voted to continue the hearing to June 7, 2016 at 7:00 PM.

Mr. Pinney asked what the construction schedule is for the Q166 line, wondering how long the construction will be in front of his home. Mr. Purington said it will be done in phases, with different phases being done in a sequence for about 2-3 months. Mr. Jiottis said they will try to avoid blasting, if drilling or ramming work.

Silverman asked if there was a department in Eversource that deals with aesthetics, someone who reviews the corridor plans, and other building plans. Mr. Purington said the aesthetic aspects come into play when Eversource meets with the local boards. He added that there is a heightened awareness of the need for an aesthetic aspect to transmission projects, compared to 20 years ago.

Silverman asked the Board if it was OK with them that he reviewed the MOU and talked with an attorney prior to the next meeting. The Board agreed it was OK for Silverman to negotiate with Eversource regarding the MOU. Buonomano asked if the Board ever called a special meeting. Gray suggested calling a special meeting so the Board could consider the revised MOU. Silverman asked Carney if it was all right to talk with Attorney Cunningham regarding the MOU.

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**Minutes.** The Board reviewed minutes of the 04/19/16 meeting. Gray moved, Blais seconded and the Board approved them as written.

**Vendor permit.** Silverman signed a vendor permit for Kevin Rule, Kev's Kayaks on Route 12 S.

**Pipeline Update.** Silverman gave a brief update on the pipeline, saying the Coalition is still an intervenor, and is now involved in tariffs and rates and water quality issues. They are meeting with the NH Congressional delegation, challenging FERC regarding the need to reimburse towns for the money spent on consultants. It's not been done in the past, however, it would help weed out trivial applications. Silverman said he met with the Keene City council regarding tariffs and rates and they and the Mayor were not supportive.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:00 PM.