

Town of Caroline
Planning Board Meeting
April 15th, 2021

Minutes

- 1) On April 20th there is an Age Friendly Community workshop (Workshop #3) that is focused on planning. Some Cornell students will be reporting on comprehensive plans and will be discussing Caroline's Comp Plan in their presentation. Wil will make a presentation on "Rural Advocacy" and her investigations into the feasibility of an age-friendly project in Caroline.
- 2) Battery Energy Storage Facilities
 - a) Wil has taken a deep dive into the New York State Fire Code, specifically the aspects related to battery energy storage facilities. A generic issue is that the codes have an "urban bias"—that is, they generally assume an urban environment and those assumptions can be faulty for rural areas. Examples: water access is not guaranteed out here; runoff from fire-fighting water and chemicals is not going to a sewer and treatment plant, etc.
 - b) The "building type" (and hence the applicable code sections) is determined by the "Authority Having Jurisdiction." In Caroline's case, that would be done by the Code Officer, though a law (or Site Plan Review Law?) could possibly specify the type. General sentiment that this was too technical and beyond the expertise of the Planning Board—probably better of leaving this to NYS or the Code Officer.
 - c) In discussion, we (with Wil's guidance) identified several areas that are not adequately covered by code that it would be good for a local law or modified Site Plan Review Law to address, specifically:
 - In rural areas, if the access road to a facility is blocked (say, by a field fire ignited by the building fire) the fire trucks cannot drive across a field to reach the buildings because they will bog down. Possible fix would be to require two different access routes suitable for fire trucks.
 - Require adequate water (and special chemicals, if needed?) to be available as part of the facility (water tank, "dry hydrant" pond, etc.).
 - Require some sort of containment around the facility so that leached chemicals, contaminated water sprayed on the fire, or chemicals applied to the fire are not discharged into the environment.
 - Specify the chain of authority if there is a fire/accident on site—should a representative of the owner/operator be designated as main authority who then calls others, or should that be a fire official, the Code Officer, or ???
 - Decommissioning standards and escrow requirements (probably require something similar to what was put in the solar law).
- 3) Everyone should give Wil's summary of what is and is not covered by fire code one more careful scrutiny and identify any items to add to the above list.
- 4) We will also look at NYSERDA's example battery law (Chapter 2 in the "New York Battery Energy Storage System Guidebook for Local Governments", available at <https://www.nyserda.ny.gov/All-Programs/Programs/Energy-Storage/Local-Government>).

- 5) Bill will ask Mark to inquire with Association of Towns about laws or zoning codes from other rural towns addressing battery energy storage facilities.
- 6) Leo Tulhill spoke briefly at the end of the meeting in support of keeping a battery storage siting law simple and focused on what was special or particular to battery facilities. Decommissioning is one such item—depending on how technology evolves, batteries left over at the end of a facility's lifetime could be detriment (hazardous waste to be cleaned up) or an asset (valuable materials to be recycled).