Planning Board Public Hearing Minutes
Zone Change Petition – Section 7.9 Solar Facilities Amendment
(meeting is being recorded)

On Tuesday, February 23, 2016, the Holyoke Planning Board held a Public Hearing regarding a Zone Change amendment to Section 7.9 Solar Facilities: to allow the use by right in business zones and by special permit of the City Council in residential zones. The meeting was held in the 4th Floor Conference Room, City Hall Annex, Holyoke, Massachusetts at 6:00 p.m.

Attendance:

Planning Board
Mimi Panitch ................. Chairman
Christian LaChapelle........... Vice-Chairman
Eileen Regan .................... Secretary
Harry Montalvo .................. Associate

Planning Staff
Marcos Marrero............... Director
Jeffrey Burkott .............. Principal Planner
Sharon Konstantinidis ....... Head Clerk

Others Present
Linda Vacon.................... Ward 5 Councilor
Kevin Jourdain ............... Ward 6 Councilor
John Redmond ................ Shield Hotel Management

MIMI PANITCH at 6:03 p.m., called for a motion to open the Public Hearing regarding solar facilities. A motion was made by CHRIS LACHAPELLE and seconded by EILEEN REGAN. The motion carried 4-0.

COUNCILOR VACON explained that the Order was filed following complaints received from several constituents regarding solar facilities that abut residential zones. She stated that solar fields impact a neighborhood and have the ability to environmentally change its character. The proposed Ordinance will require a special permit from the City Council for a solar facility in residential districts and not affect the use of solar on residential properties.

The Board received draft revisions to Section 7.9 Solar Facilities as initiated by Councilor Vacon following a review with the Law Department. MARCOS MARRERO clarified that the intent was to require a special permit for ground mounted solar facilities in all residential zones. MIMI PANITCH added that what remained was to determine the special permit criteria.

COUNCILOR JOURDAIN spoke in favor of the amendments and submitted a Boston Globe document “meeting local resistance” and a GazetteNet document “land court strikes down permit for Hatfield solar project” which states that municipalities may impose regulations.

MIMI PANITCH asked for those that wished to speak in favor or against, or to ask questions to come forward.

CHARLIE BLUEMER spoke in favor of the amendments to the zoning ordinance noting that the City needed to keep its residential areas residential. Many times, out of town developers build projects to the minimum standards.

The existing County Road solar facility was viewed and discussed an example of relative to its lack of buffering.

The Board reviewed the proposed amendments to the ordinance and discussed whether or not to close or continue the Public Hearing as the special permit criteria remained to be drafted.

At 6:31 p.m., a motion was made by EILEEN REGAN and seconded by CHRIS LACHAPELLE to continue the Public Hearing until March 22, 2016 for the purpose of obtaining additional information. The motion carried 4-0.

Respectfully submitted,

Eileen Regan,
Holyoke Planning Board