

Lewiston Town Board approves solar facility for Sanborn Farm Museum

BY TERRY DUFFY
Editor-in-Chief

Following a leadoff public hearing that drew favorable comments, the Lewiston Town Board moved to approve the site plan design/special use permit documents for a solar facility proposed by Borrego Solar Systems on the grounds of the Sanborn Farm Museum at 2660 Saunders Settlement Road.

As reported earlier, the project calls for a 5-megawatt, ground-mounted community solar energy system on a 59.5-acre parcel on Saunders Settlement and Bridgeman roads – currently a farmland. The solar project would occupy roughly 42.7 acres in the central/southern portions of the property and feature two fenced-in solar arrays occupying 23.35 acres.

The project is being pursued by officials of the Sanborn Area Historical Society Inc. as a revenue-producer for its operations.

Unlike previous hearings on solar proposals in the town that saw largely negative remarks from the public, this session was positive in nature. Sanborn Farm Museum officials told the board the financial benefits of the solar facility would greatly enhance their continuing presence.

Speakers included Glenn Weinke, an active member of the Sanborn Farm Museum since 1996, who has a lifelong interest on this property: "I was born on that farm; that's my family's farm."

Weinke went on to recall a number of events and prominent faces who have been a part of life in Sanborn over his past 86 years. He promoted the historical value and interest of the Farm Museum's attractions to the public.

"It's fun to handle all that, and that's why I'm really here to support the museum" on this, Weinke said. "We do need that money to continue (our projects). That's a very large project we have up there."

Bill Read, president of the Sanborn Historical Society, seconded those thoughts. He told the board the Sanborn Farm Museum, a 501 (c)(3) nonprofit operation with more than \$3 million in historical assets, is an integral part of Lewiston's fabric.

"We have an obligation to preserve those (assets) ... for both current and future generations," Read said.

"We need the income from the solar project to ensure the future of the museum. We have increases and expenses that are not keeping up; so we ask

that you please approve the proposal."

Gary Townsend and Ron Craft also spoke in support of the solar facility, telling board members the Farm Museum has appreciated the town's long-standing support for its operations, and that board approval of the solar proposal would help its long-term future.

Town Board officials concurred and went on to approve the solar facility as previously presented.

"If there's no problems with this, nobody spoke against it, can we move forward?" Councilman Robin Morreale asked.

Supervisor Steve Broderick concurred: "Everybody here was for the plan; nobody was against it. I'm ready to move forward."

After consulting with Town Attorney Al Bax, the board unanimously approved the design plan as presented. Included in the document are all plans, comments and adjustments covering aesthetics, such as the fence height and shielding, as well as the approval bond and payment in lieu of taxes (PILOT) considerations. The State Environmental Quality Review (SEQR) process was conducted earlier, with negative declaration, as part of the overall site plan.

In other news from the session:

- The Town Board approved a resolution by Councilman Bill Geiben that would see modifications to Broderick's salary. The measure was submitted due to state provisions related to the COVID-19 pandemic that allow for Broderick to collect his full salary for the years 2020-22. Previously, Broderick had been receiving an adjusted salary due to his state retirement status as a former lieutenant with the Niagara County Sheriff's Office.

In presenting his resolution, Geiben read:

"Whereas the Town of Lewiston approves the salary of all town employees in its annual budget, and whereas the salary of the town supervisor has been duly published and approved in the years 2020, 2021 and 2022 within the town's annual budget, to wit, \$43,580 per year in 2020 and 2021, and \$44,455 per year in 2022; and

"Whereas the town supervisor has routinely waived a portion of the approved supervisor's salary to remain in compliance with the retiree's earnings limit as established under Section 212 of New York State Retirement and Social Security Law as modified from year to year; and

"Whereas as it has come to the

recent attention of the Town of Lewiston that the above ... requirement has been temporarily suspended due to COVID-19 concerns for periods of time during the years 2020, 2021 and 2022 by an executive order issued by Gov. Andrew Cuomo's office, continued by Gov. Kathy Hochul's office; and

"Whereas under the executive order the town supervisor would be entitled to collect his full salary for his position without violating the retiree earnings limit; and

"Whereas the town supervisor's salary has been reduced by \$330 per paycheck over 40 pay periods in 2020 and 2021, representing \$13,204.62, his waived salary over the period of the suspended retiree's earning limit; (and)

"Whereas the Town Board of the Town of Lewiston desires the supervisor to collect that portion of his salary previously waived for the period defined above. ...

"Now therefore be it resolved the town supervisor is hereby entitled to receive his previously rated salary on a retroactive basis."

The provision calls for Broderick to receive two payments for the above periods in addition to his regular salary. For 2020, it would be 20 pay periods of \$330.12, or \$6,602.31. In addition to the full salary payment for 2022, the adjustment would be a total of \$9,455 to be paid Broderick's salary for the year, "as per the current earnings limits suspension," the resolution stated.

Morreale seconded the motion. It went on to be approved by a 4-0 vote, with Broderick abstaining.

- Wrapping up, the board approved two building permits sought by developer Essex Homes for lots No. 7 and No. 51 on Bridal Path Lane.

"This is a building permit for them to start building their two homes to get this project going," Morreale said. "But they won't get occupancy (permits) until the road – all the issues we have – are repaired and then road dedication. Then they'll have their occupancy."

Building/Code Enforcement Officer Tim Masters said he expected Essex to have all of the punch list items completed by June 27. "By that time, the foundations should be in; but they're still months away (from completion)."

The Essex request was unanimously approved.

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OBITUARIES

James N. Brownlie

It is with deep sadness and many fond memories that we share the loss of James N. Brownlie of Lewiston, on May 10, 2022, at the age of 88.



Jim was born to James and Verla Brownlie on Nov. 8, 1933, in St. Catharines, Ontario, Canada. Living just a block from Lake Ontario, he enjoyed hunting and rowing in his teen years. Jim started his career with General Motors, and met and married the love of his life, Gwendolyn (nee Woolcock), in St. Catharines.

His career took him and his family to Oshawa, Ontario, and Bloomfield Hills, Michigan. He was involved in numerous innovations at GM from data processing in the early years to information systems. He was part of a team that introduced on-board computer automotive diagnostics to the world.

Jim worked his way up from a factory payroll clerk position to the level of vice president at GM. In midcareer, Jim took night courses and earned a

business management degree from the University of Toronto. For a few years in semi-retirement, he advised Fortune 500 companies on management information systems.

Jim's favorite hobby was spending time in his workshop, designing and crafting beautiful furniture and keepsake chests that now grace the homes of his family. He spent winters golfing, and boating with Gwen and friends in Punta Gorda, Florida. Jim was a long-time member of the Niagara Falls Country Club. We will always remember him out in the yard and gardens pruning, raking and picking up sticks.

Jim is survived by his wife of 66 years; four children: Dianne Brownlie of Lindsay, Ontario; Stephen Brownlie of California City, California; Mark Brownlie (Amanda) of Victoria, British Columbia, Canada; and Janice Lorenz (Nick) of High Point, North Carolina. Also 10 grandchildren: Lindsay, Danielle, Branden, Dominique, Alexandria, Claire, Ian, Joey, Jack and Will; and eight great-grandchildren.

We request that, in lieu of flowers, donations be made to a charity of your choice. There will be a private memorial service at a later date.

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