

PUBLIC HEARING  
September 17, 2020

PLEASE TAKE NOTICE that there was a Public Hearing before the Ghent Town Board on September 17, 2020 at 6:30 p.m. for the purpose of considering a petition for a zoning map amendment to facilitate the construction of two 5 megawatt community solar projects fronting on Route 9-H in the vicinity of the Columbia County Airport. The public hearing will be held via the "Zoom" online meeting platform. To attend, please visit [zoom.us](https://zoom.us) and then click "Join a Meeting". You will be prompted to enter the following Meeting ID: 380 194 0032. You will then be prompted to enter the following Meeting Password: 150783. If you do not already have it installed, your browser should prompt you to install Zoom. If you would prefer to attend the public hearing by phone, please dial (646) 876-9923, enter the Meeting ID: 380 194 0032, and then enter the Password: 150783. For those unable to join online or by phone, the public hearing will be recorded and minutes produced. Any changes will be posted to the Town's website at [www.townofghent.org](http://www.townofghent.org)

**MOTION# 1 TO OPEN THE PUBLIC HEARING** made by Councilman Mort, seconded by Councilwoman Zan and approved unanimously.

Ayes: 4 Benvenuto, Zan, Mort, Wood

Nays: 0

**MOTION #2 TO ENTER INTO RECORD THE COLUMBIA COUNTY PLANNING BOARD REFERRAL LETTER** made by Councilman Mort, seconded by Councilwoman Zan and approved unanimously.

Ayes: 4 Benvenuto, Zan, Mort, Wood

Nays: 0

**MOTION # 3 TO ENTER INTO RECORD THE GHENT PLANNING BOARD REPORT, AFFIDAVIT OF MAILING PUBLIC NOTICES TO ABUTTERS BY NEXAMP, 23 LETTERS OF SUPPORT OF ZONING AMENDMENTS FROM RESIDENTS, 7 FORM LETTERS SIGNED BY RESIDENTS** made by Councilman Mort, seconded by Councilwoman Zan and approved unanimously.

Ayes: 4 Benvenuto, Zan, Mort, Wood

Nays: 0

**MOTION # 4 TO ENTER INTO RECORD NEXAMP RESPONSE TO COLUMBIA COUNTY PLANNING BOARD, SCHROM RESPONSE LETTER TO THE PLANNING BOARD AND LETTER FROM ATTORNEY STOUT ON BEHALF OF MICHAEL SCHROM AND PATTI MATHENEY** made by Councilman Wood, seconded by Councilman Mort and approved unanimously.

Ayes: 4 Benvenuto, Zan, Mort, Wood

Nays: 0

Alex Curlin from Nexamp presented a 15 minute slide presentation to the Board and members of the public regarding the project on Route 9H.

Supervisor Benvenuto – can you please speak on the decommissioning plan for the project?

Alex- Nexamp will post a bond for the project with the Town for its full life and will be submitting that plan to the Planning board for approval.

Supervisor Benvenuto – Would the deed restrictions remain in place beyond the life of the project?

Attorney Cabral- yes, that restriction remains, the property can only be used for solar.

Sheldon Evans- supports the project, win for everyone including the residents.

Supervisor Benvenuto- regarding the Indiana Bat, it's indicated the trees will need to be removed between November and March to protect their habitat. What if you cannot remove them by next March?

Corey- Counsel for Nexamp- Compliance with the regulations for the bat habitat will be made, and additional assessment if needed.

Craig Simmons- disagrees with Zoning Change, Planning Board voted 5-2 against the change. Not against solar project, but the Zoning change itself. It's not in the best interest of Ghent.

Sheldon Evans- rezoning for a project that benefits the Town, County and its residents is a significant reason to rezone.

Peter Coan- we are talking about 16 acres, minuscule amount of property to rezone which will be an even swap of residential and commercial.

Valentina- Supports investing in a green future for our children, and supports the commercial and financial benefits it brings to the Town.

Mark Johnson- it is a zoning issue, approached board last year for zoning change and was told it did not agree with master plan, and yet a year later you are talking about rezoning. Disagrees with zoning change, believes it will open a can of worms for the Town.

Supervisor Benvenuto- important to remember why we are here about rezoning. The reason this is before the Board is because this involves a community solar project.

Attorney Stout- a community solar project on a unique split lot that the vast majority of is in the commercial district.

Mark Johnson- why is the project be handled differently than other projects brought before Planning Board?

Supervisor Benvenuto- the Planning Board has to do the SEQR review, then it returns to Town board after review and if it moves forward, back to Planning for site plan review.

Attorney Stout- Planning Board has to complete SEQR before the Town Board can act on zoning change. The Planning board has been provided with additional information since last meeting's report to Town Board. Potentially this information and letters of support will be in the mix for the SEQR review and address the issues in referral report.

Rich Coon- business owner on 9H. Reviewed project, it's a 100% exchange, not spot zoning. No impact, revenue generator for the Town.

Phil Trowbridge-supports the project and zoning change, no brainer for Town.

Gunner Wordon- look at financial implications of plan for land swap in context to this project. It will bring in ½ million dollars in to Ghent in 15 years. The economic viability of project should be considered. Make the right call and base your decision not on politics.

Lyle- lives in close proximity to project and fully supports the plan. Very quiet, odorless and non- nuisance for neighbors.

**MOTION # 5 TO LEAVE PUBLIC HEARING OPEN FOR WRITTEN COMMENTS UNTIL NEXT BOARD MEETING** made by Councilman Mort, seconded by Councilman Wood and approved unanimously.  
Ayes: 4 Benvenuto, Zan, Mort, Wood  
Nays: 0

Supervisor Benvenuto closed Public hearing at 7:30 pm and thanked all participants.