

AGRICULTURE, PLANNING, TOURISM & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES – OCTOBER 24, 2023

AGRICULTURE, PLANNING, TOURISM & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE MEMBERS

PRESENT: Griffith, Campbell, Hicks, O'Brien, Shaw, Skellie

AGRICULTURE, PLANNING, TOURISM & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE MEMBERS

ABSENT: Ferguson

SUPERVISORS: Henke, Hall, Hogan

Debra Prehoda, Clerk of the Board

Melissa Fitch, County Administrator

Roger Wickes, County Attorney

Al Nolette, County Treasurer

AGENDA AS PRESENTED IN COMMITTEE NOTICE:

- 1) Call to Order
- 2) Accept Minutes – September 19, 2023
- 3) Tourism Updates
- 4) Solar Permitting; Process Overview
- 5) Fort Ann to Whitehall Trail Update
- 6) USDA and EDA Grant Submission
- 7) Other Business
- 8) Adjournment

Chairman Griffith called the meeting to order at 1:00 P.M. in the second-floor classroom, Room B214, Municipal Center, Fort Edward.

A motion to accept the minutes of the September 19, 2023 meeting was moved by Mr. Shaw, seconded by Mr. O'Brien, and adopted.

Laura Oswald, Economic Development Director, addressed the following items with the committee:

TOURISM UPDATE:

- Held the *Events* Event – They are trying to do at least one possibly two educational seminars intended to help the tourism community to get access to resources, help, etc. Events are big hits on the website. This *Events* Event was very well attended. A lot of information disseminated and looking for feedback from participants. Information appreciated and well received.
- 250th Anniversary – Warren County received a grant and did a really nice job of putting up a 250th Anniversary website. The original intent was to partner more with us, and we did provide them with information and points of interest that they included in their website. The Washington County 250th committee is still looking at creating something in addition to that so still evaluating how to help with website, social media, etc. Reached out to Saratoga County, they might be interested in partnering on putting things together and the Saratoga tourism region as a whole to really highlight how much history is here in the region. Want to make it regional and local. The Treasurer mentioned there is a small group in the Cambridge area involving the 250th anniversary. Going to use the ARPA funding in next year's budget for some funding towards the committee's needs. The key years are 2024 to 2026/2027. She has asked the Planner to attend those meetings. I Love NY is starting to do some advertising on the 250th Anniversary and I Love NY Saratoga Region received a \$750,000 grant to promote the area so they will also promote events and highlights events in the area.
- Short Term Rentals – The Treasurer stated the numbers were down very slightly. Airbnb has created what is called air coverage which is an insurance policy that is on now on every single rental that was not there before.

- Feder Canal Alliance – Mr. Hogan asked if the Economic Development Director was invited in September to the Feder Canal Alliance stakeholder meeting. Responded yes probably and usually Pam Landi, Planner, regularly attends.

SOLAR PERMITTING: PROCESS OVERVIEW – 94-c Process Flow Chart for Solar Projects, attached. How the notification process works for solar especially in respect to at what point does the Ag Farmland Protection Board get notified. Three key processes: pre-application, application and permitting, final design process and construction. Any solar project greater than 25 megawatts must go through ORES (Office of Renewable Energy Siting), cannot go through the old Article 10 process, state permitting process for large scale energy products which could be wind, solar, etc. that came under intense scrutiny because it is a process that takes a long time, many, many years and as the need for renewable energy started increasing and the state wanted to decrease the time to market to get new projects built that is what caused the creation of ORES. There is no longer going to be an Article 10 process for solar at all and will all go through ORES, statewide control of everything. It is a one-year process to get a permit. Pre-application process, the applicant is required to notify the Supervisor/Mayor may notify other interested parties and 60 days prior to submitting the application the solar company has to have a public meeting, during the application process requires notice of intent to file an application, the solar company is required to publish in local paper, mail to all residents within one mile radius of project, state legislators, and any local agencies that were part of the pre-application meeting, when the notice of intent is mailed out if the municipality believes it is going to be a contentious issue or there is additional work going to be needed that additional work always cost money so there is what is called an intervenor fund - solar companies are required to set aside \$11,000 for every megawatt of power and final phase is construction and this is the only place where there is any legal requirement the county be notified that a project is going on and that the County Highway Superintendent is required to attend a pre-construction meeting with the solar company. Ag and Markets and NYSERDA both have heavy involvement in projects. The change that any size project will come to ORES has not started yet. ORES is required to take into consideration local zoning but can ignore anything that they consider to be unduly burdensome. Article 10 is going to be phased out. Mr. Hogan expressed concern with decommissioning in the future the landowner, i.e., family farm dissolved, might not have the money to decommission the site if there is no cash surety. There have been discussions during the last couple of years about whether local municipalities could require a decommissioning plan and bond to fund that, and she will look back into if there have been any changes to decommissioning. All permitting for solar will be taken over by ORES.

FORT ANN TO WHITEHALL TRAIL UPDATE – The Empire State trail north of Fort Ann goes up to Whitehall on St. Rt. 4 so as a County worked really hard to try and figure out a way to get that trail off Rt. 4. The County had an award through LWRP to design and part construction of the trail and an award from Canal Corp. Issues with CP Rail caused the project to go from seven miles down to a shorten segment from Fort Ann to Ryder Road and cross over to Rt. 4 is what they decided to work on. Received Board approval to issue a new contract with LaBella, engineering, and design team, and have now been informed that Canal Corp has pulled the money stating no money for a trail to nowhere. This grant expires at year end. The issue is timing because no extension. We can use the Canal Corp funding, \$150,000, for any project on the canal but it requires a 50/50 match and without construction nothing to use as a match. We have committed \$24,000 and would need another \$20,000 which she would take out of the bed tax. Right now, the county investment is time. She has

logged more than 150 hours on this project the last few years and asking the committee if there is interest if she can find a way for Canal Corp to allow us to proceed with permitting then could see spending the additional money to proceed on this project but if Canal Corp will not move then hard to move forward. She was also informed that the County would have to have money for future maintenance because Canal Corp does not want to own and must maintain. The potential to commit future cash then might need to abandon this project. This is a dead issue, do not bother to proceed.

USDA and EDA GRANT SUBMISSION:

- Submitted EDA Recompete Grant which is intended to provide assistance to LEAP for Workforce Development. The application consisted of a request to hire a consultant to analyze how LEAP does things, what are best practices, what can be changed, and it also included funding to hire a project manager that would potentially be turned into a business liaison to better communicate with employers.
- USDA \$1M – Documentation has been submitted for review. Broadband summary of where we are: 2000 unserved or underserved addresses within the county and this grant will fully provide equipment to about five hundred residences is progressing. Continue to work with the State Connect All Office – Federal FCC mapping process which is identifying more accurately where the true unserved are and have identified three hundred fifty addresses that were funded by the State of New York to Verizon to provide service in the towns of White Creek, Cambridge, and Jackson and were identified on the FCC map as unserviceable so she challenged them and Verizon has conceded on all of them. Leaves about 1200 addresses that will take between \$12M and \$14M to get coverage and continuing to work with the Connect All Office to try and secure funding in addition to what the County has set aside.

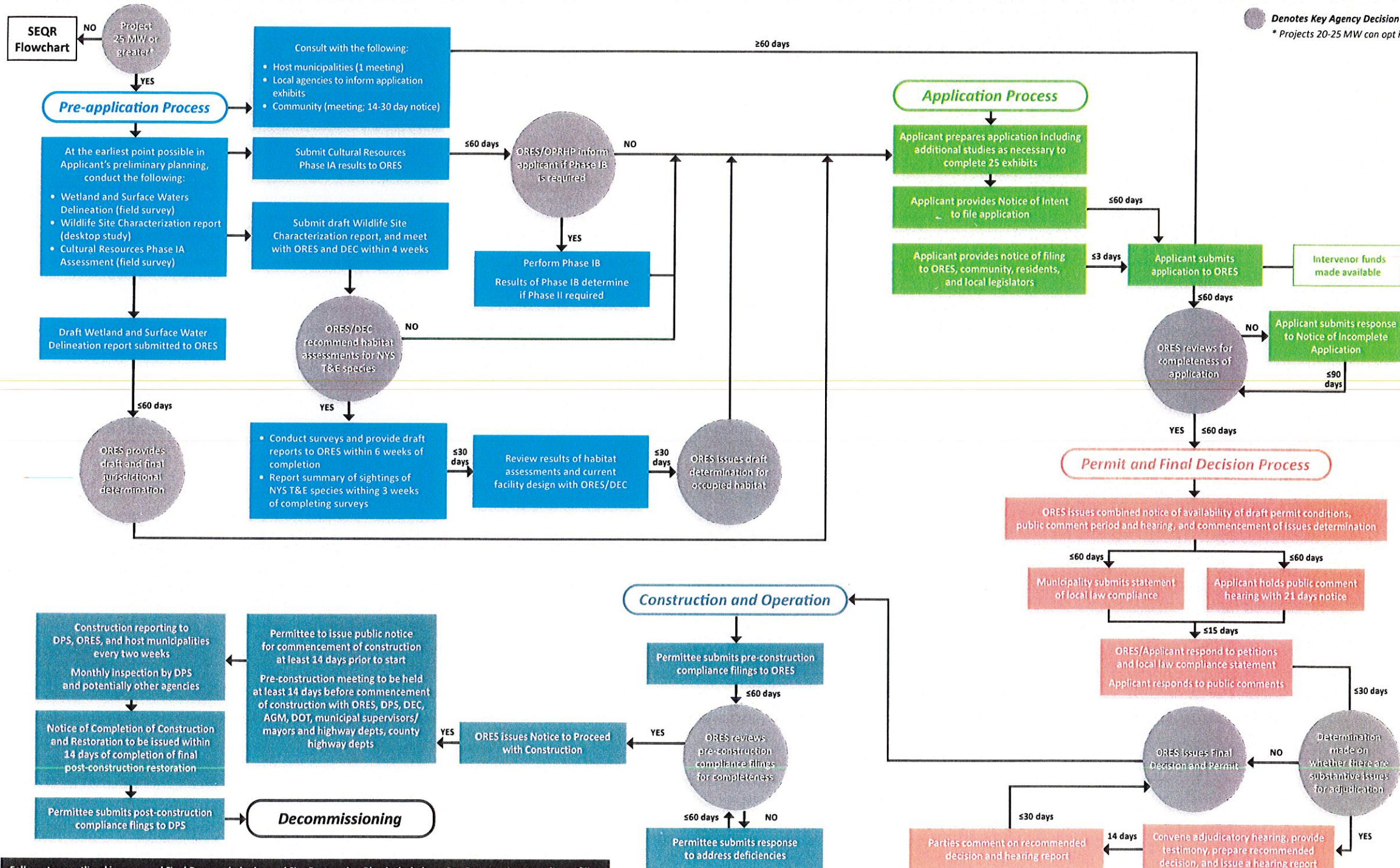
OTHER BUSINESS: none.

The meeting adjourned at 2:05 P.M.

Debra Prehoda, Clerk
Washington County Board of Supervisors

94-c Process Flow Chart for Solar Projects

Denotes Key Agency Decision
* Projects 20-25 MW can opt in



Follow steps outlined in approved Final Decommissioning and Site Restoration Plan included as a Pre-Construction Compliance filing Schedule is determined within this approved plan

