

Sun Moon Farm approved for solar array

The Zoning Board also unanimously approved a variance for ReVision Energy to place a solar array within the 50-foot setback from the road at Rindge's Sun Moon Farm.

The farm, located on Thomas Road, would be home to a large, 95-kilowatt ground array. Farms in the area have purchased shares of the energy produced by the array, which will allow them to pay 20 percent less than their current energy costs for the first six years, until the array is paid for, and receive the energy for free after that.

The Zoning Board received overwhelming community support for allowing the array within the setback. There are other places on the farm it could go, representatives of the project explained, but it would require the use of state-designated prime farmland soil.

"This is an opportunity to help farms be more viable while protecting valuable soils in our region," said Amanda Littleton, the district manager for the Cheshire County Conservation District.

Neighbors of the farm said the project had their full support, and they didn't mind the encroachment into the setback. The farm's nearest neighbor, Dan Bissex, said even if the array was set further back, outside of the 50-foot setback, it wouldn't change his view of it, and there was no reason not to let the project move ahead.

"That's a fantastic farm and it's a fantastic project. They're great people. We approve 100 percent," agreed Ron Osimo of Rindge.

"I see no problem with this in the neighborhood and as a long-time Rindge resident I totally support this initiative," added another neighbor, Richard Mellor.

The board was also provided a petition with 86 signatures from Rindge residents in support of the array and allowing it to be constructed within the setback. No dissenters offered any objections during Tuesday's meeting.

The board agreed the array did not damage the character of the neighborhood or otherwise negatively affect the surrounding area.

"I think from my perspective, this is an easy one," Zoning Board Chair George Carmichael said. "Everyone seems to be on board with this."

The board unanimously granted the variance.