

ENHANCED ENERGY PLANNING WORKING GROUP

NORWICH ENERGY COMMITTEE NORWICH PLANNING COMMISSION

DRAFT Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, May 1, 2018, Tracy Hall

Regular Meeting

Members Present: Members Present: Chris Damiani (TRORC), Linda Gray (NEC Chair), Susan Hardy (NEC), Aaron Lamperti (NEC), Norm Levy (NEC)

Clerk: **Others/Guests:** Linda Cook, Jack Cushman, Joel Stettenheim

Linda Gray, of the Norwich Energy Commission, called the meeting to order at 7:03 PM.

1. **Agenda Approved**
2. **Comments from the Public** - None
3. **Minutes** – 4-3-18 Regular Meeting minutes were approved by consensus
4. **Announcements, Reports, Updates & Correspondence**
 - a. - Chris noted that a large (20 MW) solar project has been proposed in Randolph <https://www.ourherald.com/articles/opposition-forms-around-big-solar/>
5. **Reports related to energy information in current Town Plan as it relates to the standards of Act 174 Checklist:**
 - a. Data analysis and targets:
 - i. Further discussion of the desire of the working group to make this section very easy for anyone to understand. Because the budget for Chris's support is running out, he will email the Word document for this section to the group. Aaron will take the lead on editing and revising a draft for our next meeting.
 - b. Pathways discussion focused on one area, Pathways on Renewable Development/Siting:
 - i. To understand the permitting process better; Joel Stettenheim of Norwich Solar Tech answered questions and outlined the state permitting process for solar projects.
 - ii. In response to questions, Joel explained that solar projects are developed in these different ways:
 1. net-meter, for which individual business, non-profit, or residential customers pay for either the panels or the net-meter credits
 2. standard offer, in which the electricity is sold to the utility under a state-run auction process that sets the contract price
 3. a contract directly with a utility (usually for projects of at least 5 MW)
 4. PURPA (Public Utility Regulatory Policies Act of 1978), usually for huge projects, selling directly to the utility
 5. [Note; under the Vermont Renewable Energy Standard, net-meter, standard offer, and direct contract projects up to 5 MW count

toward the utilities' requirements for distributed renewable generation. <http://puc.vermont.gov/electric/renewable-energy-standard>

- iii. Discussion of net-meter projects identified that, because they are likely to be smaller and directly connected to local users, they are more suitable to Norwich planning goals. That is, unless a site perfect for a very large project was identified. Joel estimated that a 5 MW solar array would require 35-50 acres.
- iv. Under current rules, net-meter projects need to be sited on official "preferred sites." Preferred sites are defined as roof, parking lot canopy, repurposed structure or impervious surface, brownfield, landfill, reclaimed gravel pit or quarry, a site designated by the Town, a superfund site, or the same or adjacent parcel to a customer who will use 50% of the project's electricity.
- v. Joel explained that all projects must apply to the PUC (Public Utilities Commission) for a Certificate of Public Good. It is during this process for solar projects that most of the same criteria used for Act 250 are reviewed by various state agencies (impact on water, soil, aesthetics, historic sites, natural areas, wildlife habitat and endangered species). And during this process towns can raise any concerns they have about the project.
- vi. The process starts with the developer providing a "45-day notice" to legal abutters, the town, the regional planning commission, and state agencies. If questions are raised, the developer must answer them before submitting the full application for a CPG. Once the full application is deemed "complete," the PUC begins its review. Joel noted that it used to take 4-6 months to go from complete application to being granted a CPG; now it's taking more like 9 months.
- vii. The town is alerted with the 45-day notice and the full application; once the PUC starts the review process, the town can track information and filings via the PUC web site. <https://epuc.vermont.gov/?q=node/83>
- viii. Historically, town concerns have been given "due consideration" by the PUC; now, concerns raised by towns with an approved enhanced energy plan will receive "substantial deference" by the PUC.
- ix. Consensus that language for the enhanced energy plan should include both a listing of actual parcels as preferred sites and language that would outline a process for designating other preferred sites.

6. Other Business – None

7. Future Meeting Schedule & Agenda Items

- a. Tuesday, June 5, 2018 – Regular Meeting at 7:00 PM
- b. Continued review of Act 174 Checklist and the current Town Plan

8. Comments from the Public - None

Adjournment: 9:00 PM

Linda Gray

Future Meetings:

Tuesday, June 5, 2018 – Regular Meeting at 7:00 PM

Enhanced Energy Planning Subcommittee Agendas & Minutes available at:

<http://norwich.vt.us/planning-commission/> and <http://norwich.vt.us/energy-committee/>