

Article 36 Task Force

In March 2019, the Town of Norwich advised, through the passing of Article 36, all Town Officials to “take immediate and sustained efforts to gradually and continually reduce the Town’s direct use of fossil fuels, beginning at a rate of no less than 5% per year starting in the 2019-20 and continuing until they are eliminated entirely.”

This task force will initiate work towards an aggressive and comprehensive work plan to achieve the elimination of direct fossil fuels in the Town of Norwich.

About the Task Force

Membership

The task force will be composed of five (5) members, as follows:

- One member of the energy committee, recommended by the committee and appointed by the selectboard
- One member of the planning commission, recommended by the commission and appointed by the selectboard
- One selectboard member, appointed by the selectboard
- Two community members appointed by the selectboard through their application/appointment process. The background of the applicant may include:
 - An individual with a background in environmental justice work or organizing
 - An individual with experience in greenhouse gas reduction and climate resilience strategy
 - An individual with a background or experience in finance and financial planning

The task force will report to the Selectboard and make recommendations jointly to the Board and Town Manager. The Selectboard is the appointing authority and may remove any member for good cause, including unexcused absence from two or more consecutive meetings without cause. Task force members are expected to abide by all Town of Norwich policies.

Members shall serve until the elimination of the Town's direct use of fossil fuels or otherwise by an action of the Selectboard.

Authorities of the Task Force

The Task Force shall have the authority to:

- 1) Elect one or more members to serve as Chairperson and elect one or more members to serve as Vice Chairperson, who shall serve as Chair in the absence of the Chairperson.
- 2) Organize itself, establish committees or subcommittees, enlist the expertise of others as needed, and delegate duties for the performance of its work. All committee and subcommittee membership representing a quorum must adhere to guidelines of the Vermont Open Meeting Law.
- 3) Adopt rules of procedure for its meetings to accomplish its functions. Provision for public input shall be listed on the agenda of each meeting, and agendas and minutes taken and posted should be in a timely manner in accordance with the Vermont Open Meeting Law.
- 4) Make requests to the Town Manager's office for staff time, expertise, and documents.

Meetings that are conducted via Zoom shall include links to the video conference via phone or internet and shall include a telephone number should the Zoom link fail to open for any or all participants. The Town Manager's office will provide assistance in scheduling Zoom meetings and posting minutes.

Task Force Scope

- 1) Coordinate efforts with the Energy Committee, Finance Committee, and other Town Committees and Commissions, as needed
- 2) Provide proposals or recommendations for the design of new policies, programs, projects, and staffing, and for modifications to existing policies, programs, projects, and staffing to the Town Manager and Selectboard for the reduction of direct fossil fuels. These proposal or recommendations may include, but are not limited to:
 - a) Organizational capacity
 - i) Help determine role of town staff in benchmarking and tracking energy performance of town-owned buildings and fleet

- ii) Recommend plans to improve town staff's commitment and awareness to fossil fuel reduction and elimination through training or communication strategies
- b) Measurement and tracking of energy performance
 - i) Create a system for benchmarking and publicly disclosing energy consumption for Town buildings and fleet, including methodologies for creating a Green House Gas inventory and fuel reporting standards
 - ii) Implement and improve the process for collecting data for buildings and vehicles. It may be proposed that benchmarking efforts, facility energy audits, cost of carbon calculations, and other current information regarding building and vehicle data may be managed in a central and accessible location
 - iii) Improve data management for building characteristics, including information regarding building insulation levels and mechanical systems
- c) Improved operations and maintenance for buildings and other capital assets
 - i) Establish guidelines that ensure that investments yield optimal results towards fossil fuel reduction. These guidelines may focus on best practices such as HVAC system controls, scheduling and set points, ventilation loads, and lighting system controls, sensors and scheduling
- d) Capital investments in building and transportation inclusive of analyses and prioritization, which may include:
 - i) Proposals for extensive energy use reductions factoring both up-front and life-cycle costs for fossil fuel reduction
 - ii) Develop a standard methodology for determining the effectiveness of capital projects, which may stem beyond life-cycle costing towards discount rate, inflation and utility rate escalations, and more
 - iii) An exemption process for investments in assets that do not reflect the goals of fossil fuel reduction but accomplish other town-wide goals or needs
- e) Pilot programs, purchases, or technologies to gather more information on certain assets before significant investment

- f) Recommendations for spending appropriate to the guidelines of the Climate Emergency Designated Fund
- 3) Submit an initial work plan to the Selectboard by August 1, 2021. An August 2021 work plan may contain items as outlined in items 1 and 2, but must:
- a) Define what constitutes a policy, program, or project that advances the directives of Article 36 as it relates to the Town-owned buildings and fleet.
 - b) Summarize work-to-date on Town's Green House Gas (GHS) emission and provide an analysis. Identify areas of improvement or missing data, if applicable, and identify approaches to fill in missing data, to the extent deemed possible.
 - c) Provide an engagement plan for collaborating with existing committees whose scope aligns with those of the Task Force.
 - d) Provide an audit of the Task Force's scope of work, including priorities, goals and outcomes, and key stakeholders to consult. This audit may include suggestions for climate action work beyond the Article 36's call for direct fossil fuel reduction.

The Task Force charge can be amended or revised by action of the Selectboard.