

DRAFT MINUTES, ARTICLE 36 TASK FORCE
SPECIAL PUBLIC MEETING, JULY 29, 2021

The Town of Norwich Article 36 Task Force met in public session at Tracy Hall and via Zoom/telephone at 7 pm on Thursday, July 29, 2021.

Two of the five members, Ernie Ciccotelli and Jack Cushman (chair) attended in person and the other three members, Robert Gere, Eva Rosenbloom and Aaron Lamperti, attended via Zoom internet conference call.

One member of the public, Linda Gray, attended via Zoom and another member of the public, Linda Cook, attended via telephone call to the Zoom link. No member of the public reported any inability to connect.

Cushman noted that the only business to be conducted was the editing of the chairman's draft "initial work plan" document for submission to the Selectboard in accordance with the Task Force charge. The agenda was revised by consensus to defer any matter not related directly to the work plan, including discussion sought by members of the public about the idea of district geothermal energy in the town; one of the members of the public suggesting this idea had told Cushman in writing that he could not attend, so this matter was best postponed.

The Task Force approved the draft minutes of the 7/21 meeting.

The 7/21 public meeting had provided opportunity for public comment on the draft report. This 7/29 MEETING was the sole occasion for a quorum of the Task Force to edit the document.

All editing of the work plan was achieved by full consensus of all Task Force members. At its organizational meeting earlier this year the Task Force had determined to work by consensus and Cushman noted that all Task Force members supported this approach. Therefore no roll call votes were taken and the resulting work product is supported by the consensus of the entire group.

Linda Cook made no recommendations or substantive comments during the meeting.

Cushman first asked the entire group whether there was any portion of the report that should be removed by consensus; no member suggested that.

Cushman then asked Ciccotelli to offer any specific comments, as Ciccotelli's comments were cut short at the public comment session a week earlier, in order to give full attention at that meeting to the public comments.

Ciccotelli said he did have a few comments, especially around the subject of indirect emissions or life cycle emissions of greenhouse gases that might ensue from any future recommendations of the Task Force to reduce direct emissions, which is the objective of Article 36.

At the outset, Ciccotelli said his remarks did not need to be included in the draft initial work plan as editing proceeded. Rather, he called on the Task Force to ensure that indirect and life-cycle emissions considerations be reflected in later deliberations. The Task Force agreed by consensus that this was appropriate. Other comments by Ciccotelli, he agreed, were also best dealt with later.

Cushman then walked the committee through several paragraphs of the report that described public comments received at the meeting on July 21, or via correspondence from the public.

In most cases, the consensus was that these public comments had been noted in committee minutes, were to be considered during future meetings, and were welcomed and appreciated; however they were deemed by consensus to be out of place within the limitations of the initial work plan, in which the Task Force was attempting to adhere strictly to its mandate from the Selectboard.

By consensus, the Task Force removed from the report most matters that dealt with specific actions that will be taken later, and rather those public comments and the timing of discussions about them are fully reflected in minutes and merely alluded to in the Task Force report as part of our work plan.

By consensus, the Task Force agreed not to attribute language in its report to any specific member of the Task Force or the public; this information has been adequately presented in minutes. Cushman asked whether all statements of fact or analysis in the report should be presented as full consensus of all task force members, and by consensus all members supported that.

Because minutes should reflect public comments at a meeting by name, we note that Linda Gray made several comments pertaining to the members' discussions of which paragraphs to include, and why.

In particular, Gray thought that a fuller discussion of actions already taken by the Town to reduce its greenhouse gas footprint should be reflected in this report. However, the Task Force decided by consensus not to include an elaborate or specific listing of past actions. Instead, it wrote into the work plan a note that past accomplishments would be examined closely at future meetings.

Cushman asked whether the "preamble" section of the report was useful or was unnecessary. The preamble mainly deals not with the schedule of our work, but rather it spells out the worldwide scientific consensus and impetus for urgent, transformational change in energy patterns. This background explains both the need for Article 36 and the urgency of the task at hand. By consensus, all present said this section was useful and necessary. Ciccotelli in particular emphasized its value. Gray suggested that links to supporting matter be complete and

be tested as “working” links. Ciccotelli suggested that the full wording of Article 36 be inserted at the very top of the report. All these edits were accepted by consensus.

Cushman asked for approval to attach as an addendum to the report more detailed data prepared by the Task Force on point by point fuel use and emissions for the baseline year 2019. Recognizing that even better data may be collected in the future, the consensus was to present this data, which has been available to the public, as part of the report. By consensus the Task Force agreed to provide further addenda or references later, as appropriate, once the public has had a full opportunity to view these materials, suggest other materials, and otherwise comment.

Other edits involved relatively minor matters like grammatical usage, slight changes in wording for the sake of clarity or accuracy, and decisions to shorten the report by eliminating excess verbiage, and all these edits reflected a full consensus of the members.

Cushman asked if he should submit the final report on Friday. Lamperti said that we should be sure to allow members to review the final report individually in case of any error or misunderstanding. Gere, a member of the Selectboard, said it would be fine to take the weekend rather than to rush the process of proofreading, and to submit the report on August 2.

These draft minutes were prepared by Cushman and are respectfully submitted, subject to revision, on July 30, so they may be published no later than Aug. 3, in keeping with statutory requirements.