

Norwich PC Solar Siting Subcommittee

December 5, 2023 Minutes

DRAFT

Members present: Clement, Laaspere
Absent: Ciccotelli

Public participating: Linda Gray, Jack Cushman, Kathleen Shepherd, Rob Gere, Mary Albert

Meeting started at 6:35

1. Approved Agenda
2. Public comment for items not on the agenda - none
3. Correspondence – packet materials related to the upcoming revision of VT 5.100 net metering regulation.

Laaspere reminded the group that we are adding useful references to the subcommittee's section of the town web site. Of note for today's topics:

- East Montpelier town plan [good example of PV siting criteria]
- Windham county regional energy planning [background on town energy planning with links to all enhanced plans in the state and many other resources]

We had a brief discussion on the upcoming changes to the state net metering regulations. These changes have not yet become effective, with the final stage being review by the state LCAR committee. Most significant to our charter - the new regulations change the definition of a preferred site by limiting the clearing of forest to less than 3 acres. This will need to be included in any revision to the energy section of our town plan.

4. Scenic Resources and Ridgeline Protection

Conversation focused on whether to update our town energy plan to qualify as an enhanced energy plan. This has several advantages and requirements. The most significant advantage is that it increases the town's influence over net metering projects. With an enhanced energy plan the desires of the town, such as siting criteria, preferred sites and screening requirements, would be given "substantial deference" by the PUC. As part of creating such a plan we would need to be very specific about preferred sites and show a feasible plan to reach our town's allocation of Vermont's renewable generation goals.

There are a great number of resources and experts available to help towns with energy planning. Many of our neighboring towns have EEPs and the TRORC regional commission is quite knowledgeable.

It is the subcommittee's strong desire to maximize public participation and we discussed the challenges of doing this. People are more likely to engage in a specific project that is meaningful to their lives, rather than a general conversation. We hope to use this specific energy planning project to engage residents. To allow maximum public participation we plan on maintaining informal membership in the subcommittee and this project. Official delineated membership is not necessary since the Planning Commission will review all output and vote on any revisions.

We agreed to focus the subcommittee on the project of updating our town plan's energy section to meet the qualifications of an enhanced energy plan. We will present this proposal to the full Planning Commission at their December 12th meeting.

5. Approved minutes of November 14, 2023 - Unanimous

Our next meeting will be in January. At that meeting we will begin the work to pull together resources, participation, and content for an enhanced energy plan.

6. Adjourned at 8:05

Minutes submitted by Jaan Laaspere