

APPROVED 04-30-2024

**Norwich PC Solar Siting Subcommittee & Planning Commission
April 16, 2024 Minutes**

Subcommittee members present: Ernie Ciccotelli, Kris Clement, Mary Gorman, Jaan Laaspere

Public attending: Annette Smith, Kathleen Shepherd, Linda Gray, Zara Reeves, Joy Kenseth, Mary Albert, Jim Antal, Alice Werbel, Amy Stringer, Elizabeth Spencer, Rob Gere, Stephen Gorman, Dan Goulet, Susan Barrett, Bob Pape

Meeting started at 6:35

1. Approved Agenda

2. Public comment for items not on the agenda - none

3. Correspondence

24 V.S.A §4385

24 V.S.A §4382

Vermont Act 59

4. Town plan amendment discussion

Related packet material – Norwich solar and wind maps

We had a guest speaker to provide guidance on enhanced energy planning and the relationship between town plans and state processes, including 30 V.S.A Section 248 and Act 250.

Annette Smith, Executive Director for Vermonters for a Clean Environment, presented an immense amount of very helpful and relevant information. A link to her presentation is included at the end these minutes, along with many useful links to maps, example town plans and other resources. The subcommittee is extremely grateful to Annette for sharing her knowledge and experience.

The minutes record a very small portion of the discussion. Please refer the meeting video and the references at the end of this document for much more detail.

Possible initial steps for updating Norwich energy plan

Annette agreed that upgrading our energy section to qualify as an enhanced energy plan would not be a great deal of additional work.

We could start with generating town input into two sides of the siting topic:

- Identify what places, views, etc. people want to protect. One element of this could be an updated scenic inventory.
- Identify potential locations that could be candidates for preferred sites for renewable generation.

Creating a preferred site map is one method of specifying potential solar sites. It can also be done with specific criteria, locations and definitions.

Possible town plan improvements for specificity and increased influence

To be useful in the state processes of Section 248 and Act 250 our plan needs an overall shift from an aspirational, high-level document to include a specific set of goals and guidelines that can be used in a stand-alone document for regulatory purposes.

Use the word “must” to have regulatory weight.

Districts specified in a plan can be useful, if allowable development for these districts is well defined. This could include our historic district and resource protection district.

5. Preferred Site Letter process

Annette gave her interpretation on the roles of the three bodies involved in preferred site review:

Planning Commission – Reviews whether the project complies with town plan

Selectboard – Can look at a broader array of topics, including economic or any criteria of Section 248 GHG emissions

Regional Planning Commission - TRORC – Reviews regional criteria

She thought TRORC had a standard form for evaluating preferred siting letters. We will ask and get a copy if such a document exists.

In her opinion the Planning Commission can use its judgment when reviewing a preferred siting request. We compare the project to the town plan and can consider topics referenced in the plan such as steep slopes, forest blocks, etc., not just scenic.

Mary volunteered to be the liaison with Annette and funnel people’s questions and requests to her. We discussed how we might benefit from Annette’s expertise going forward. Mary will check with her about options.

6. Approved minutes of March 26, 2024 - Unanimous

7. Adjourned at 8:40

Our next meeting will be April 30, 2024

Minutes submitted by Jaan Laaspere

Resources from Annette Smith, VTCE

Presentation to Norwich Solar Siting Subcommittee

http://vtce.org/Norwich_EnhancedEnergyPlanning_16April2024.pdf

Vermont Town Enhanced Energy Plan Preferred Sites Maps/Addison & Bennington Regions

http://vtce.org/EnhancedEnergyPlans_PREFERREDsites_23Feb2024.pdf

Google Earth Overlays — these links will download .kmz files.

Instructions about how to open them in Google Earth are on p. 10 of the presentation.

Norwich Solar Resources with Constraints Map

<http://vtce.org/Norwich%20Solar%20Resource.kmz>

Norwich Forest Blocks

<http://vtce.org/Norwich%20Forest%20Blocks.kmz>

GMP Solar Map

<https://gmp.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=4eaec2b58c4c4820b24c408a95ee8956>

Norwich Town Energy Committee Solar Map

<https://norwichenergycommittee.weebly.com/norwich-solar-map.html>

GMP 3-phase Map

<https://greenmountainpower.com/help/3-phase-service-vermont/>

GMP Conductor Sizing Map

<https://www.arcgis.com/home/webmap/viewer.html?webmap=51f68dfd7d3145868287849e628eb3e4&extent=-75.2659,42.7068,-68.7949,45.1318>

Vermont Energy Dashboard — heat pumps, EVs, etc.

<https://eanvt.org/vermont-energy-dashboard/>

Act 174 Constraints Map Layers

<https://vcgi.maps.arcgis.com/home/webmap/viewer.html?layers=bbbff1931ade4391aa19281e5d2bdaae>

Vermont Energy Planning Atlas Act 174 constraints (with other options of maps for planners including historic resources)

<https://maps.vermont.gov/ACCD/Html5Viewer/index.html?viewer=PlanningAtlas>

Example of Solar Siting By-law, Salisbury, Vermont

https://www.townofsalisbury.org/vertical/sites/%7B59D8C83C-9968-4A65-BB2B-00DE19899066%7D/uploads/Solar_siting_bylaws_012616.pdf

Vermont Natural Resources Atlas
<https://anrmaps.vermont.gov/websites/anra5/>

Vermont Biofinder
<https://anrmaps.vermont.gov/websites/BioFinder/>

Vermont Interactive Map Viewer
<https://maps.vermont.gov/vcgi/html5viewer/?viewer=vtmapviewer>

Vermont Center for Geographic Information — List of Maps with Links to all available maps

<https://vcgi.vermont.gov/maps/partner-agency-maps>

Norwich Town Plan
https://norwich.vt.us/wp-content/uploads/2012/06/Norwich_Plan_2020-ADOPTED-Ir-.pdf

TRORC page for Norwich with plans, by-laws, maps
<https://www.trorc.org/towns/norwich/>

Department of Public Service page for Act 174 Recommendations and Determinations <https://publicservice.vermont.gov/about-us/publications-and-resources/energy-resources/act-174-recommendations-and-determination>

— 2024 Guidance

Document https://publicservice.vermont.gov/sites/dps/files/documents/2024%20Guidance%20for%20Regional%20%26%20Municipal%20Enhanced%20Energy%20Planning%20Standards_0.pdf

— Generation Scenarios Planning Tool

<https://publicservice.vermont.gov/document/generation-scenarios-planning-tool>

Statute governing energy generation projects

<https://legislature.vermont.gov/statutes/section/30/005/00248>

See (b)(1) for the language about (A) due consideration and (C) substantial deference

Statute enabling homeowner renewable

energy <https://legislature.vermont.gov/statutes/section/27/005/00544>