

Norwich PC Solar Siting Subcommittee

July 16, 2024 Minutes

DRAFT

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

Public attending: Mary Albert, Rob Gere, Amy Stringer, Linda Gray, Pam Piper, Steve Gorman, Annette Smith

Meeting started at 6:32

1. **Approved Agenda**

Noted that this will be an organizational meeting to plan upcoming work.

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

3. **Correspondence**

Acknowledged receipt of comment from Paul Manganiello and response from Annette Smith.

4. **Town plan amendment discussion**

The group discussed the July 9th Planning Commission meeting's review of the subcommittee's work on town plan edits and creating an enhanced energy plan. The PC's response was positive. The PC asked the subcommittee to continue its work and offered several suggestions.

To help create a defined process for reviewing new renewable energy projects in town, a suggestion was made to use language from our existing subdivision regulations or zoning by-laws. Since the state does not allow the use of zoning regs in the review of these projects, can useful language be moved into the town plan to be made available during project evaluation? To help us understand what is possible along these lines, Annette Smith recommended the group review a precedent setting case from Rutland in 2015. This case addressed the topic of exactly what type of language was allowable within a town plan. Links to relevant documents will be added to the subcommittee web page and the group is encouraged to read them carefully before our next meeting.

Discussing our upcoming work, it was agreed that our priority is the definition of the process and criteria that will be used by the PC when reviewing new PV projects. Our second block of work is the identification of criteria, mapping regions and possibly specific parcels as preferred sites for PV projects.

Linda Gray and Annette Smith gave the group important information relating to changes in state regulations driven by the new renewable energy standard law. Specifically, certain types of net-metered PV projects will not be allowed after 2024, including projects similar to those completed or pending in Norwich. The use of preferred siting letters may be less important going forward, but strong siting guidance is still needed in the town plan since commercial projects,

possibly larger than 500kW, can still be proposed by developers. These projects would be reviewed using whatever process and plan the town had in place. Given its targets for increasing renewable energy generation, the new state RE standard could increase the pressure to site new PV projects in towns across the state.

People were encouraged to survey other town plans for details on good wording for both a review process and preferred site designation. Everyone was asked to send good examples to Mary Gorman to be compiled for our next meeting.

5. Approved minutes of June 18, 2024 - Unanimous

6. Adjourned at 7:22

Our next meeting will be August 20, 2024.

Minutes submitted by Jaan Laaspere.