

Meeting of the Norwich Energy Committee
Tuesday, 8/25/26, 7 pm, via Zoom

Attending: Mary Albert, Rob Gere, Linda Gray, Aaron Lamperti, Brad Wible
Public: Mary Gorman (~7:15 to 7:35)

1. The 7/28 minutes and the 8/25 agenda were approved by consensus.

2. Future Events/Outreach

a. Members agreed to cosponsor a workshop on EVs organized by Sustainable Hanover (tentative details 9/29, virtual, 6 – 7:30 pm, with Dave Roberts from Drive Electric VT and someone from NH counterpart). NEC would help with publicity via listserv and web site. Linda will confirm with SH organizers.

b. Discussion of current status of community listservs: Mary will pursue registering NEC to be able to post on Front Porch Forum, she will confirm with the Town Manager. Rob reported that serious discussions are underway to move the listservs to another sponsoring organization, which will likely succeed.

c. For the WindowDressers Build, 2025 volunteers received an email this week inviting them to help this year, Linda and other coordinators will do listserv posts in their towns to recruit volunteers.

4. Energy Plan Working Group: Rob and Brad reported that they are working on the Goals/Policies/Action section, not on the full energy chapter text. Mary described the edits that she had emailed earlier in the day (attached to minutes: Mary Albert edits in blue font; earlier edits in green font from Brian Kovalick of TRORC), based on her experience in project management. She highlighted that Policies must reinforce Goals, and Actions must clearly implement Policies. Plus, the timing and responsibility for Action should be clear. Rob and Brad can convey Mary's comments to the Working Group. Linda noted that, from a recent Solar Siting group meeting, the full Planning Commission may discuss the Energy Plan at its October meeting.

5. Tracy Hall Energy Upgrades:

Aaron reported that he's been away and missed the last few meetings of the Tracy Hall working group, which is focused on options for spaces within the building. The status is still the same: possible recommendations this fall, with a building project that incorporates energy improvements to follow. Aaron will continue participating,

6. Shared Energy Coordinator report: Linda had no updates, as the August meeting of the SEC Steering Committee was cancelled. She will meet with Harry this week and review his work on updating A36 recommendations.

7. Committee organization: The committee has 2 vacancies; current members to reach out to possible recruits.

8. Other Business: Linda revisited plug-in solar, shared details of educational activities in Brattleboro; consensus was that public discussion was still premature, given that we can't point residents to equipment to purchase and use.

Mary asked for guidance on regular listserv posts; agreement that, in September, posts can cover EVs and the SH workshop; at the September meeting, we will discuss a roster of topics longer term.

Rob confirmed that he and Mary are ready to plan web presentations.

9. Public comments, correspondence and announcements:

10. Adjourned at 7:50. The fourth Tuesday in September is 9/22.

| Submitted by Linda Gray

EDITS from Mary Albert ENERGY

Objectives

Norwich embraces goals identified in Vermont statutes:

- Reduce greenhouse gas emissions from Norwich municipal operations, businesses and residents (24 VSA §4302 (c) (7)).
- Reduce overall energy use in Norwich (24 VSA §4302 (c) (7)).
- Shift energy use in Norwich from non-renewable to renewable sources (24 VSA §4302 (c) (7) (A)).
- Increase the amount of renewable energy being produced in Norwich in a manner that is consistent with the goals, objectives and policies of this plan (24 VSA §4302(c) (7) (A)).
- Pursue strategies identifies in the State Energy Plan (30 VSA §§202, 202b).
- Increase the number of trips aboard Advance Transit by Norwich residents (24 VSA §4302(c) (4) (A)).
- Construct a sidewalk or multiuse path between Norwich Village and the Hartford town line along US-5 (24 VSA §4302(c) (4) (A)).
- Weatherize Tracy Hall and install heat pumps for thermal heating (24 VSA §4302(c) (7) (A)).

Policies

- ~~The municipality must establish a mechanism to collect and appropriate funds to support projects that further the objectives of this Energy Plan.~~
- Ensure that the review of the Norwich Zoning and Subdivision Regulations has a balanced approach to is informed by the link between issues involving changing land use patterns and reducing fossil fuel use.
- ~~The municipality must include and minimize Promote bike and pedestrian as non-vehicular transport modes using best practices for traffic engineering such as sidewalks, bike lanes and dedicated trails.~~
- ~~Consider~~ lifecycle energy costs when planning to construct or upgrade municipal facilities.
- ~~Norwich rDevelop programs that assist low income households with weatherizing and improving the efficiency of existing dwelling units.~~
- Requires that development or upgrade of large-scale commercial and institutional buildings larger than 5,000 ft² must development to install solar panels on roofs and /or over over any parking lots ~~where feasible.~~
- The municipality must expedite ~~For solar generation projects sized from 15kW to 500kW the presumption is that all of Norwich meets the Public Utility Commission~~

definition of 'preferred site', notwithstanding the existing areas of local concern including the Ridgeline Protection Overlay Area, Shoreline Protection Overlay Area and the historic village district as identified in the Norwich Land Use Regulations.

- Support approval for permitting applications for the development of new renewable energy generation facilities on the state's list of preferred sites:
 - New or existing structures,
 - Parking lot canopies,
 - Previously developed parcels,
 - Brownfield sites,
 - Former sanitary landfills,
 - Disturbed portions of gravel pits/quarries/mineral extraction sites,
 - Superfund sites or those listed on the National Priorities List.
- Development of new renewable energy generation facilities must be carefully sited and conditioned to minimize any undue adverse effect upon Norwich's:
 - Historic districts, landmarks, sites and structures listed on state or national registers;
 - Public parks and recreation areas, including trail networks;
 - Designated scenic roads (TH-35, TH-52, TH-53);
 - Special flood hazard areas identified by National Flood Insurance Program maps (except as required for hydropower facilities);
 - River corridors land within 50 ft of the river's edge (except as required for hydropower facilities) as designated by the Vermont Agency of Natural Resources;
 - Highest priority interior forest blocks or habitat connectivity blocks as designated specifically by the municipality on maps within the Town Plan or by maps available from the Vermont Agency of Natural Resources;
 - Public and private drinking water supplies that have been, including mapped as source protection areas in the Norwich Town Plan;
 - Primary agricultural soils mapped by the U.S. Natural Resources Conservation Service with the exception of agrivoltaics and with the exception of land owned by a farmer (farmers have sole authority over use of their land);
 - Necessary wildlife habitat identified by the state or through prior site analysis, including core habitat areas, migration and travel corridors that are shown on maps within the Norwich Town Plan;
 - Significant natural communities identified by the identified by the Vermont

- Agency of Natural Resources or through prior site analysis mapped in the VNHI Inventory spatial database;;
 - Rare, threatened, or endangered species habitat or communities identified by the Vermont Agency of Natural Resources or prior site analysis or through site analysis; mapped in the VNHI Inventory spatial database;
 - Vernal pools identified by the Vermont Agency of Natural Resources and mapped within the Vermont Vernal Pool Atlas or through site analysis.
- The following areas within Norwich are unsuitable for the development of new energy generation facilities and are prohibited:
 - Floodways identified by National Flood Insurance Program maps (except as required for hydropower facilities);
 - Wetlands as indicated on Vermont State Wetlands Inventory maps or identified through site analysis.
- Without interfering with the project's function, use screening to reduce the visual impacts of energy generation, transmission, and distribution projects as seen from public roads and neighboring properties. This policy shall not apply to solar arrays installed on rooftops nor any ground-mounted solar arrays with a capacity of 15 kW or less.
- ~~NAI~~ new energy generation projects with capacity larger than 15 kW must limit site clearing to the minimum necessary extent.
- Biomass energy generation or thermal energy generation facilities must utilize appropriate air pollution control measures.
- Biomass energy generation or thermal energy generation facilities are prohibited from being sited within any census block group that meets the state's definition of having an environmental justice focus population under 3 V.S.A. § 6002(4).
- A minimum distance from the base of any proposed wind turbine to any property line or town or state highway right-of-way should be, at a minimum, 150% the height of the wind turbine.
- Develop small hydroelectric facilities in Norwich only if the project meets the other policies of this plan and avoids or, if no other reasonable alternative exists, minimizes and mitigates undue adverse impacts to riverine ecosystems and water quality.
- ~~Support Advanced Transit in providing a range of commuter services to Norwich, providing connections with locations where residents attend school, work and shop.~~

Actions

- The municipality must ~~e~~Establish a mechanism to collect and appropriate funds to support projects that further the objectives of this Energy Plan.
- The municipality must expedite establishment of ~~Promote~~ bike and pedestrian as

non-vehicular transport routes/modes using best practices for traffic engineering such as sidewalks, bike lanes and dedicated trails.

- The municipality must sSupport Advanced Transit in providing a range of commuter services to Norwich, providing connections with locations where residents attend school, work and shop.
- The municipality must dDevelop new programs, or support existing programs from available Efficiency Vermont, SEVCA, and other organizations, that assist low-income households with weatherizing and improving the efficiency of existing dwelling units.
- The municipality must collaborate withSupport the work of Green Mountain Power to create a more resilient and hardened electric infrastructure.
- State representatives representing Norwich must aAdvocate before VTrans on behalf of non-vehicular road users for improved accommodations on state highways.
- The municipality, in collaboration with the Norwich Energy Committee, must rReview and compare hybrid, and electric, and fossil fuel options and lifecycle costs early in the planning process forfor any municipal vehicle purchase or replacement.
- The municipality must collect records of fossil fuel purchase for each department on an annual basis, and make the report accessible to the public.
- The municipality must create a strategy for addressing Consider how to address barriers to development related to limitations on wastewater capacity, including a review of the findings of the 2005 study conducted by the Norwich Sewer Committee in light of current challenges and changes in wastewater management.
- The municipality must expedite the permitting process on applications forEncourage development projects to install solar collectors on rooftops and parking lots.
- The Norwich Selectboard must pParticipate in the Section 248 process before the Public Utility Commission to make decisions that further the goals, objectives, and policies of this plan.
- The municipality must iImplement to the best of our abilities the (non-binding) Article 36 from the Town of Norwich 2019 ballot, which was passed by voters:

Shall the voters of Norwich direct 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 percent per year starting in the 2019-20 fiscal year and continuing until they are eliminated entirely, and shall the Town Manager be charged with monitoring such efforts and reporting on them each year in the annual Town Report, and no capital expenditures shall be made that contradict or undermine this direction, absent a majority vote of the Selectboard?
- The Norwich Town Manager must eEnsure that the Zoning Administrator or their designee has the training and resources to both enforce state Residential Building

Energy Standards and issue Certificates of Compliance on development projects greater than 800-sf.

- The Norwich Energy Committee must collect and broadly distribute information to Norwich. Provide residents with information on the topics of:
 - cold-climate heat pumps, and other non-fossil fuel heat sources in new construction and in existing homes and buildings;
 - replacing fossil fuels powered vehicles with electric vehicles;
 - managing forest land for long-term, sustainable harvesting of wood.
- The Norwich Energy Committee must hold activities and broadly distribute information to rRaise climate crisis and energy awareness among Norwich citizens.
- The municipality must wWork with community groups and others to support and promote non-vehicular transportation options in Norwich.
- The town mustshoud include energy efficiency and use of renewable energy when planning for capital projects and consider adopting a Capital Budget and Program that includes weatherization, fuel switching, and electric efficiency projects at Town-owned facilities.
- The town must pPromote ridesharing among Norwich residents by broadly advertising sharing information about Tri-Valley Transit's Dial-A-Ride Program.