



PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING
Public Hearing – Town Plan Amendment
Wednesday, March 13, 2019
Minutes

Present: Chuck Gregory (Chair), Char Osterlund, Jesse Webster, Beth Gray, Qayyum Johnson, Michael Martin (ex officio), Walter Martone (ex officio)
Absent: Judith Stern

Also present: Renee Vondle, Town Planner, Tom Yennerell, Kristi Morris, Peter MacGillivray, George McNaughton, Melissa MacKenzie, Steven Osterlund, Lori Claffee, Hallie Whitcomb, Walter Clark, Joseph Wilson, Daniel Pettigrew, Eva Pettigrew, John Hall, Donna Hall, Cynthia Martin (applicant), Martha Straskus & Joel Stettenheim (Norwich Solar Technologies, agent)

1. **Call to Order:** Chair, Chuck Gregory called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. Mr. Gregory stated that the purpose of the meeting is an open public hearing on the proposed amendment to the Town Plan Energy Chapter. Mr. Gregory called on Char Osterlund to present the proposed amendment.
2. Ms. Osterlund introduced members of the Energy Committee: Steven Osterlund, Melissa MacKenzie, Halley Whitcomb and Peter McGillivray. Ms. Osterlund stated that it was a 1 ½ year process where the committee worked diligently on many drafts. She thanked Jason Rasmussen from RPC for guiding the committee and keeping track of the many versions.

Ms. Osterlund stated that the State of Vermont has a goal of reaching 90% renewable energy by the year 2050. She noted that the committee modeled their report after the State model with certain elements that are required. The Energy Chapter is an 18-page document that outlines Springfield's energy goals which are:

1. Promote energy conservation
2. Transition from fossil fuels to renewal resources
3. Develop new local sources of renewable energy
4. Monitor energy uses within town
5. Promote land use patterns that result in energy conservation
6. Achieve substantial deference from the Vermont PUC for the Town Plan

Ms. Osterlund reviewed the second section regarding analysis of our current energy use for electricity and space heating. She stated that Springfield is not reaching our goals. The two areas that the State is focusing on is thermal energy (space heating) and transportation. There is a big push for weatherization as Vermont has a lot of old housing stock.

Ms. Osterlund stated that the Energy Committee has partnered with Efficiency Vermont and the Weatherization Assistance Program for low-income households through Southeastern Vermont Community Action (SEVCA) to encourage residents to participate in energy efficiency programs.

George McNaughton asked if the new Energy Chapter will preserve the Town Plan Siting Criteria for the Large Solar Array. Ms. Osterlund stated that it has changed a little bit, but the committee added more detail to the aesthetics.

Ms. Osterlund spoke on the following policies which apply to solar projects:

1. Springfield supports rooftop solar projects.
2. Springfield supports residential-scale wind turbines
3. Prohibited solar locations in the following areas:
 - a. Vernal pools with a surrounding 50-foot buffer
 - b. River Corridors as mapped by the DEC
 - c. FEMA floodways
 - d. State significant natural communities and rare, threatened and endangered species
 - e. National wilderness areas
 - f. Class 1 and Class 2 wetlands
4. Proposed renewable energy facilities must demonstrate that the proposed project siting is appropriate in scale as it relates to the character of the area in which it is to be located and the applicant must also demonstrate that all reasonable options have been considered in siting the facility.
5. All ground-mounted solar projects must meet or exceed the setback standards in 30 V.S.A. §248(s).
6. Any new biomass facility and all ground-mounted solar projects of 150 kW or greater that are within view of the public roadways (i.e. state highways, US routes, and Class 1, 2 and 3 town highways) must provide landscaping that blends the project with its surroundings.
7. Must maintain any required landscaping for the entire life of the project.
8. Must provide a plan for the site to be adequately decommissioned.
9. Must not have undue adverse impacts on significant wetlands, significant wildlife habitat, wildlife travel corridors, stormwater, water quality, flood resiliency, important recreational facilities or uses, scenic resources identified in the Energy Plan or inventoried historic or cultural resources.
10. Must not result in substantial deforestation or cause forest fragmentation.
11. All utility-scale wind and commercial-scale wind projects must be evaluated and reasonable mitigation must be considered in respect to operational noise, “shadow flicker” and avoidance or minimal adverse impacts to significant wildlife habitat and wildlife travel corridors and to avoid or mitigate safety hazards including ice shedding, ice throw hazards, blade throw hazards and tower fall zones.

Mr. McNaughton asked if there were any conservation caps on energy use that might adversely affect projects like the Black River Innovation Campus which will have a lot of computer usage involved where there would be heavy energy usage. A cap could cause problems for a high heavy energy use such as a server farm. Jason Rasmussen stated that there were targets in the chapter, but not caps.

George McNaughton asked if there was positive language in the chapter about hydro-electric? Char Osterlund stated that Table 7 states how much energy hydro generates, but the proposed chapter does not promote it and the primary reason for that is because of the prohibitive cost of dams and licensing and the negative impact of water quality downstream. Mr. McNaughton asked if the chapter promotes hydro? Ms. Osterlund stated that it did not.

3. Adjournment - 7:14 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Renee L. Vondle
Recording Secretary/Town Planner