

Brandon Planning Commission Meeting
May 7, 2018

Board Members Present: Stephanie Jerome, Ethan Nelson, Michael Shank, Bill Mills

Board Members Absent: Lisa Rovi

Also in Attendance: Anna Scheck – Zoning Administrator, Barbara Noyes Pulling – Rutland Regional Planning Commission (RRPC)

1. Call to order

Stephanie Jerome, Commission Chair, called the meeting to order at 6:38PM.

2. Agenda Approval

A motion was made by Bill Mills to approve the agenda as amended. **The motion passed unanimously.**

Change in the agenda to move the Energy Plan/Map Review following the Consent agenda.

3. Consent Agenda

a. Approve Planning Commission Minutes – April 2, 2018

A motion was made by Michael Shank to approve the Planning Commission minutes of April 2, 2018. **The motion passed unanimously.**

4. Energy Plan Progress/Map Review

Michael Shank reported there have been three citizens; Gary Meffe, Edna Sutton and Lowell Rasmussen that have expressed interest in serving on an Energy Committee. Stephanie Jerome and Michael Shank of the Planning Commission are also interested in serving on the Committee. An ad was placed in the Reporter requesting letters of interest from interested applicants. Once the Select Board approves the Committee, Mr. Shank will convene the group to work on the development of a one-page criteria list, begin to map out the impervious lands and quarries, and ultimately edit and approve a draft Brandon Energy Plan. Ms. Scheck noted the deadline for the submission of letters of interest is May 21st. It was suggested an Energy Committee agenda item be requested for the Select Board meeting on May 29th.

Barbara Pulling requested the Commission members consider the renewable energy sites for both constraints and preferred areas. Many towns have taken industrial scale wind off the table. To make an area unsuitable for renewable energy, it has to apply to all development. Ms. Pulling provided a list of suggested local areas that would be possible constraints and preferred areas as a starting point. Michael Shank questioned whether buildings, like the Aubuchon building that has a flat roof, would be counted towards the Town's energy goals. It was noted that private property solar is not regulated by the Town. Ms. Pulling advised that the Planning Commission has to abide by what the Town has in the by-laws. If a Town does not require screening for all businesses, it could not require it for just solar. If there are other changes allowed on flat roofs in the downtown, it could not restrict solar. Anna Scheck reported there are no zoning regulations for the historic buildings and right now, the ordinance does not regulate rooftop solar. Ms. Pulling noted for projects within a floodplain, there are already state requirements.

Stephanie Jerome advised the next steps would be to add more possible constraints and preferred areas to the listing and review the maps. Michael Shank envisioned the Energy Committee building on the list and reviewing the maps as a starting point for the Committee. Barbara Pulling suggested the Committee start

with the list provided and use the maps in tandem to determine if there is enough resources to meet the state's target. The current maps show where the resources are and there are areas that could accommodate biomass. Ms. Jerome noted Brandon has several old quarries and suggested there be discussions with local people to determine the sites of the quarries. Ms. Jerome also suggested inquiring whether members of the Select Board would like to participate on the Energy Committee.

Barbara Pulling advised due to Act 171 legislation, all newly approved Town Plans would require a section on Forest Fragmentation that will include information on wildlife habits. The RRPC can provide the Planning Commission a map of the wildlife crossings. Ms. Jerome also requested the RRPC provide a map for the Nature Conservancy. Ms. Jerome noted the Town Plan now indicates commercial solar sites will not be visible from either Route 7 or Route 73. Ms. Pulling noted the Planning Commission could ask for more screening of a project. A project also has to be 100 feet back from a state highway. It was noted a requirement for screening would likely not pass the PUC, as it would be inconsistent with the rest of the businesses' requirements. Ms. Pulling stressed there needs to be consistency across the board. In lieu of changing screening for all businesses across the board, the Town can request the developer do more screening and farther setbacks. In a review of the document provided by Ms. Pulling, it was suggested the lands around Old Brandon Village, Hawk Hill and the Audubon land on Route 7 be added to the conserved lands. Ms. Pulling suggested adding a statement about conserved lands and the same language could be included for land trust property. Ms. Pulling reported if the Commission wants to keep track of projects, the PUC has a new site. Ms. Jerome noted relative to the Conti Solar project that they are requesting to move the solar site from Park Street Extension site to a site to be determined. Ms. Jerome had a meeting with the neighbors in that area and an update was provided on the potential for moving the project to another location. Ms. Jerome stated it is good to hear that Conti Solar is receptive to changes. Michael Shank stated better screening of projects needs to be determined noting concern that the region is not moving towards renewable energy fast enough. Ms. Jerome questioned what the renewable energy requirement was for the Town of Brandon. Ms. Pulling reported every town in the Rutland region was given the same target, which is 50% renewable energy by 2050. Michael Shank has had discussions with Doug Bailey with regards to recs going out of state. Mr. Shank suggested representatives from the Town meet with GMP to encourage them to purchase more renewable energy. They will be required to make the switch by 2030; however, it is thought that GMP is waiting for renewable energy to become less expensive. Barbara Pulling advised that every project counts towards the Town's target in the Energy Plan, including residential projects. The Public Service Department keeps track of this information and it is posted on the Energy board. Ms. Pulling noted the recs are very complicated because those who sell their recs outside the State get more money and the system encourages outsourcing. Mr. Shank questioned who would be a good educator on this subject to invite to an Energy forum. Ms. Pulling advised there is an outreach person from the Energy Dashboard who would be a good source to do an Energy forum.

5. Zoning Administrator Report

Anna Scheck reported permit applications are on the increase due to the time of year. The two permits for the mobile homes were approved by the DRB, with conditions. There are a couple of permits submitted to raze structures and there was a sign permit received from a business. The permit for the brewery was completed today.

Ms. Scheck provided the Commission information from the PUC for Babcock Solar. Ms. Scheck reported there would need to be changes to the Flood Hazard section and adoption of a River Corridor section of the BLUO. Ms. Scheck was not sure of the timeline, but noted that she has a model for the Commission's consideration for the flood hazard changes and currently has interim river corridor regulations. If the Town does not comply with these changes, it would lose the 17.5% federal funding. Ms. Scheck noted the Town has Flood Hazard regulations, but there have been some changes that will need to be incorporated. The Regional Planning Commission will review the interim plan the Town has to determine what will be needed. Ms. Scheck will provide the Planning Commission a copy of the interim document and will confirm the deadline for updating the Plan with the RRPC.

6. Signage Discussion

Discussion on this topic was completed during the Planning Commission hearing prior to the meeting.

7. 2018 Priorities

Stephanie Jerome stated the list of 2018 priorities currently includes the development of an Energy Plan and updating the Flood Hazard section and addition of a River Corridor section for the BLUO. Ms. Jerome questioned whether the Zoning Administrator had additional concerns with the BLUO. Anna Scheck reported off-street parking is going to be an issue. Michael Shank suggested the space behind the Aubuchon building is for sale and noted there had been discussion of a parking garage. Anna Scheck advised that would be an issue because it is a flood hazard area. Ms. Scheck noted the change of the Aubuchon building to include residential housing could increase the issue of off-street parking. Ms. Scheck suggested there could be spaces reserved in the parking lot behind the Mobile Station for residents in the business district. It was noted that redevelopment is encouraged, but there needs to be consideration with off-street parking.

Stephanie Jerome will contact Sam Stone of the DRB to see if the DRB has any other issues with the BLUO or Town Plan. Ethan Nelson noted the Sign ordinance was one of the big issues for the Planning Commission. Anna Scheck stated there was also discussion of reviewing the land use designations, as they have to be coordinated with the designated downtown and the change in the regulations. Michael Shank stated there needs to be a review of the growth trends and suggested there could be boundary lines created to be intentional with development, rather than creating sprawl. Ms. Jerome will compile a list of proposed priorities for distribution to the Commission members. Mr. Nelson asked if the Planning Commission has a role in the development of items like bike paths. Ms. Jerome reported there had been previous discussion of a bike path plan and noted there should be a bike path from the village to Neshobe School, OVUHS and Estabrook Park. Mr. Nelson reported he is working with Bill Moore on the bike project. Ms. Scheck advised that once the changes have been made to the BLUO, it would have to be presented to the Select Board for their review. The Select Board will be required to hold two hearings regarding the changes.

8. Old/New Business

There was no discussion held.

11. Date of Next Meeting

Monday, June 4, 2018 at 6:00PM – Brandon Town Hall – Planning Commission Meeting

12. Adjournment

The Committee Chair adjourned the meeting at 8:08PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Charlene Bryant
Recording Secretary