

**Brandon Energy Committee Meeting
July 2, 2018**

Committee Members Present: Michael Shank, Lowell Rasmussen, Edna Sutton, Daniel Schmitz, Jack Schneider

Also in Attendance: Stephanie Jerome, Barbara Noyes-Pulling

1. Call to order

Michael Shank called the meeting to order at 5:02PM.

2. Agenda Approval

A motion was made by Edna Sutton and seconded by Lowell Rasmussen to approve the agenda as amended. **The motion passed unanimously.**

Addition of Election of Committee Chair immediately following Introduction of Committee Members

3. Introduction of Committee Members

Introductions were made by all members of the Committee.

4. Election of Committee Chair

A motion was made by Edna Sutton and seconded by Jack Schneider to elect Michael Shank as Chair of the Brandon Energy Committee. **The motion passed unanimously.**

5. Overview of Energy Plan Task by Rutland Regional Planning Commission

Barbara Noyes-Pulling of the Rutland Regional Planning Commission (RRPC) advised that the Legislature passed Act 174 to make energy plans possible and is designed to give towns more say and provide substantial deference to towns during the public utility hearing process for projects. Act 174 enables towns to develop energy goals and targets with the State having a goal of being 90% renewable energy by 2050. To help this, it commissioned some modeling (LEAP modeling) to help the State see how it can reach the goal. There is a 14-page checklist of items for the approval of the towns' energy plans. The RRPC has put together data for the towns in its area. The checklist requires information on resources, scarcities, heating, cooling and transportation. It provides guidance on how to do the maps. Each town needs to decide where they want or do not want energy development that will be part of the substantial deference review for proposed projects. Another part of the energy plan is to come up with implementation actions or pathways to address the sectors of energies, state goals and the municipal goals. The regional plan took its goal and divided it by the number of towns in the region. Ms. Pulling will email this information to the Energy Committee members. Ms. Pulling noted the plan has to be consistent with the other policies of the town, such as a land use policy. A town cannot single out a particular source of energy. Michael Shank asked how the Energy Committee would weigh in on proposed projects. Ms. Pulling advised that comments would be directed to the Planning Commission and the Town Manager.

Ms. Pulling has been working with several towns on the development of energy plans that takes varying amounts of time to complete, with Sudbury completing the process in 6 months. Mr. Shank advised he will be inviting the Sudbury Planning Commission Chair to the next meeting to provide information on their process. A copy of Sudbury's Town Plan was provided to the Committee members for review. Edna Sutton asked if the RRPC has helped towns determine the sites and whether there assistance with helping

the community members understand the process. Ms. Pulling stated it varies by town, but suggested the Committee try to get the word out and make the meetings as public as possible. Mr. Shank suggested the Committee host several public educational forums. He sees many opportunities to host forums and workshops. Ms. Pulling stated it would be important to show the benefits of an energy plan to the community members, as it will be part of the Brandon Town Plan. Ms. Pulling stated Brandon will attract many developers due to the 3-phase distribution line that runs close to the Town. Daniel Schmitz questioned whether bio-fuels are being considered. Ms. Pulling stated all towns have to address, solar, wind, biomass and hydro. Most of the towns have taken out industrial-type wind, which is acceptable as long as there is still some small wind projects that can be allowed. Lowell Rasmussen stated projects have to embrace the local economy and hopefully provide jobs that might not have existed without them. He stated renewable energy and local economy are inseparable. Mr. Rasmussen questioned if much of the plan is about residential. Ms. Pulling stated most towns will not have problems finding solar sites, but the State is relying on residential solar in the years to come. Biomass is not up to scale yet and hydro is an ordeal to get or refurbish a dam that is in place. Mr. Shanks advised Green Mountain Power is good about providing information on the opportunities available to make homes greener. Edna Sutton asked if a town could be proactive in its partners and invite people to take up some of the work for them. Ms. Sutton stated it makes sense for a town to own its plan and one would want competitive bids to assure it is the right partner. Mr. Shank questioned if a town could designate preferred areas and engage with a particular solar company. Ms. Pulling advised the projects are State regulated, but a town could potentially pursue community solar projects. She noted towns have total right to talk to developers to get a side deal aside from the State's approval of a project. Mr. Shank suggested there needs to be projects documented to show the benefits of energy projects. Mr. Rasmussen stated there needs to be benefits outlined for residential solar, not just commercial solar. Ms. Pulling stated it is important to provide as many details that can be placed in the plan, to avoid issues with items such as the sale of recs. Jack Schneider asked if there are restrictions for agricultural land. Ms. Pulling noted some towns are more serious about not using agricultural land; however, she has worked with towns that have a more practical view of agricultural areas in their towns. Ms. Sutton asked if a town could require developers to update the technology of a project over the years. Mr. Schmitz noted part of this plan should be reducing energy needs, along with the addition of new sources. Ms. Pulling stated there would be many homes that will need to be updated for energy conservation, which is all part of the modeling.

6. Draft Energy Plan Review

The Committee members were provided a draft Energy Plan for their review. Mr. Shank provided information on the Vermont Energy goals that includes achievement of energy goals by 2050, reduction of greenhouse gas emission and relying on in-state renewable energy by 2025. Mr. Shank did not think that the 2025 or 2050 messaging needs to be part of the agenda at this point. He noted there needs to be discussion on health, security and energy messaging. Ms. Pulling noted these are targets for the State. Mr. Schmitz stated there needs to be information on how to improve homes as part of the energy efficiency process. It was noted there is a dashboard that the State is keeping track of all new installations. Ms. Pulling noted any project 15 kilowatts or larger has to go through the Public Service Board and those smaller require a permit.

7. Maps Review

Michael Shank provided the maps that have known and possible constraints in the Energy Plan. Ms. Pulling noted the known constraints are already pulled out of the maps. The maps provide a starting point to develop a preferred list of solar sites that could include quarries, parking lots and obscured acreage. There are prime and secondary solar sites that are the best places to put up solar arrays. The prime sites do not have any known constraints. The secondary sites have one or two possible constraints that may or may not affect development, however, do not necessarily rule out the sites. Ms. Sutton suggested having an overlay of an economic development map for future development. Stephanie Jerome stated there are some industrial zones that could be developed further. Ms. Jerome noted it also needs to be determined if

solar is preferred on the historic buildings, as there could be many alternative options to alleviate the disruption of the buildings. Ms. Jerome suggested having conversations with the Vermont Historic Preservation Department to obtain their recommendations. It was suggested that micro-hydrant that is not a big dam-type operation could be considered, as it does not disturb the streams.

8. Prioritization of Committee Tasks

Mr. Shank suggested the goals for the next meeting would be 1) to develop a criteria list similar to the list distributed by Rutland Town that had been distributed to the Committee members, 2) begin developing a list of preferred sites that will build a roadmap of where to have conversations with businesses and homeowners and 3) come up with a workshop on energy conservation. Mr. Shank also suggested inviting Efficiency Vermont and Green Mountain Power to host a workshop in September.

Mr. Schmitz advised he will pass along information to the Committee members regarding VEPP, Vermont Energy Education Program that provides programs in schools. Mr. Rasmussen questioned if the demographics have been done. Ms. Pulling noted that information has been included in the modeling. It was asked if solar increases the property value and taxes on a home. Mr. Shank was advised that his assessment would not change when adding solar.

Mr. Shank suggested the Committee could host an Electric Car Day where there could be a Tesla brought into town for people to view and obtain information.

9. Calendar Scheduling of Future Meetings

The Energy Committee meetings will be the first Monday of each month beginning at 5PM.

Next Meeting will be Monday, August 6, 2018 @ 5PM in the Brandon Town Hall

8. Adjournment

The Committee Chair adjourned the meeting at 6:38PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Charlene Bryant
Recording Secretary