

Brandon Energy Committee Meeting
August 6, 2018

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

Also in Attendance: Stephanie Jerome, Barbara Noyes-Pulling, Larry Rowe

1. Call to order

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

2. Agenda Approval

A motion was made by Lowell Rasmussen to approve the agenda, as amended. **The motion passed unanimously.**

Discussion with Larry Rowe – Sudbury Planning Commission member regarding Sudbury’s Energy Plan

Postponement of minutes approval

3. Approval of Minutes – July 2, 2018 Meeting

The minutes approval was postponed to a subsequent meeting to allow for review by Committee members.

4. Sudbury Energy Plan Discussion with Larry Rowe

Larry Rowe, Sudbury Planning Commission member, stated that Sudbury suffered a sense of being overwhelmed due to the amount of information and the process for establishing the priorities of the local constraint map. He noted current use parcels were not considered in Sudbury. Conserved lands and the habitat block were highly regarded. Mr. Rowe assumed solar would be the primary source of energy for Brandon as opposed to hydro, biomass or wind. It was noted there appears to be many areas in Brandon that could be regarded as prime or secondary areas for solar. Sudbury wanted very low visibility for the projects, as there were already two solar areas that were highly visible. It was their intent to keep them away from homes and the traveling public and there were enough areas that met that criteria. Once the sites were determined, the landowners were asked if they would be amenable to having their properties listed as preferred sites. Mr. Rowe noted it is key to get the buy-in from the landowners in order to provide contractors viable sources. Michael Shank noted the Committee would need to do door to door conversations with residents. Edna Sutton suggested testimonials could be obtained from residents that have solar to use as a type of buy-in for the process. Stephanie Jerome questioned who wrote Sudbury’s text for the energy plan and Mr. Rowe advised that Barbara Noyes-Pulling assisted in that effort. The current text in the BLUO indicates the Town does not want solar fields on Routes 73 or 7 that are visible. Mr. Rowe suggested preferred sites that are in the one-mile corridor of a three-phase power line would be the most optimal sites as they would be desired sites for developers and would satisfy the quota for the State. By doing this, the town would have substantial deference with the Public Utility Commission. Barbara Noyes-Pulling advised there is a new rule for net metering that is another kind of preferred site where a developer can get approval with a letter from the town’s planning commission and select board. It was questioned whether there is any town property that would fall under the preferred sites. Mr. Shank suggested representatives from the Energy Committee meet with Elaine Smith and the Town Manager to obtain their assistance in identifying sites. Mr. Rowe noted Sudbury identified both town and state buildings that were considered preferred solar sites. Ms. Sutton questioned how Sudbury communicated the plan with the townspeople. Mr. Rowe advised there had been two controversial solar fields that had

been placed in Sudbury and the townspeople had voiced their appeals and from that, a plan was developed that had no issues come up. The primary driver of Sudbury's Planning Commission was that solar would be placed in areas that would not be visible. The Planning Commission meetings were open to the public, but there were no additional meetings held concerning the development of the plan.

4. Develop Criteria List for Renewable Energy Development

Barbara Noyes-Pulling advised there was an item added to the list. Michael Shank read the following criteria list for preferred sites for net metering and renewable energy provided by Ms. Noyes-Pulling and proposed adoption of the criteria for Brandon:

“Criteria:

1. Renewable energy generation potential is present on site (as indicated by the state's data layers for prime and secondary resources).
2. Each proposed project is considered in a transparent and non-arbitrary manner and that each proposal is consistent with other land uses in that district as specified in the Municipal Plan and Future Land Use map.
3. If located in the AGR40 (Agricultural & Forestry Working Lands) District: The proposed project meets the definition of "lands presently used for or suitable to support agriculture, forestry, and related commercial, recreation and tourist related enterprises."
4. If located in the AGR40 (Agricultural & Forestry Working Lands) District: The proposed project is considered small-scale commercial that "preserves the setting, natural features and contours of the land".
5. If located in one of the town's Scenic Resources (view sheds) as specified in its Municipal Plan: The project does not have an "undue impact on the visual or scenic resources of other locations within the town from which it can be seen" using what's known as the "Quechee Analysis" legal precedent.
6. The site avoids environmentally-sensitive areas (wetlands, flood hazard areas, wildlife habitat).
7. The Town of Rutland has notified all abutting property owners and requested the developer to take all generally available and reasonable steps to mitigate the project's visibility.
8. Access must be available to firefighters and other emergency responders as defined in the town's Driveway Installations Ordinance, Article 1, § 181/20-24 (adopted in 1980).
9. Every alternative energy project larger than 15 kW shall include an action plan and a guaranteed funding source for decommissioning to ensure the site is safe, stable and free of structures and hazardous materials.”

Edna Sutton suggested there could be additional criterion added for Brandon. Lowell Rasmussen stated there are some very good points in the current Town Plan's Energy Section and suggested this document be compared to the current Plan and the BLUO to assure there is not any conflicting wording. Mr. Shank thought the document covered all core objectives, but would need some tweaking to include Brandon language. Mr. Shank requested Ms. Noyes-Pulling email the latest version of the criteria to the Energy Committee members. A comparison of the BLUO, Town Plan and Brandon-specific criteria will be discussed at the September meeting. Ms. Jerome noted updates would be required for both the BLUO and Town Plan.

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5. Draft List of Preferred Renewable Energy Sites

Michael Shank suggested that he and another Energy Committee member meet with Elaine Smith and the Town Manager to discuss possibly three to five sites that could be explored that may or may not be municipal sites. Edna Sutton advised the Compass Art Center could be added to the list of preferred sites for solar. Mr. Shank suggested having photographs of some current sites to encourage property owners to consider their properties for preferred sites. Ms. Sutton volunteered to join Mr. Shank in a meeting with Town staff.

6. Discuss Workshop on Energy Conservation

Michael Shank noted the workshops would be an opportunity to invite people from different organizations in Rutland and Montpelier to provide information on energy. Jack Schneider suggested there is a State program that provides information to people on winterizing homes. Mr. Shank suggested a workshop titled, Preparing for Winter, with NeighborWorks and Efficiency Vermont potentially groups that could assist in this workshop. Lowell Rasmussen suggested a segment on how to make transitions from fossil fuels to renewable systems and provide information on options that are available, such as electric boilers. Mr. Shank suggested Dundon's could also be a supplier that could assist in this type of workshop. Barbara Noyes-Pulling suggested two possible workshops with one concentrating on conservation with Efficiency Vermont and NeighborWorks assisting and a second workshop on new options that could have Efficiency Vermont and Green Mountain Power assisting. She noted both Efficiency Vermont and Green Mountain Power run the Innovation Center in Rutland. Mr. Rasmussen would also like to include a discussion on jobs and the economy as it relates to the State's renewable energy goals. Ms. Noyes-Pulling stated there might need to be two criteria lists, with one list for larger projects that would require a business plan and an MOU and a criteria list for smaller projects or the people that would want to get into net metering. The criteria list could also be for just developers. Mr. Rasmussen questioned where data could be obtained and Ms. Noyes-Pulling advised the Public Service Department, which is the administrative arm of the PUC, would be the department that could potentially have the data. Mr. Rasmussen suggested there could be a post-construction review that would give more credibility to the process. Mr. Rasmussen volunteered to draft a document relating to this subject. Stephanie Jerome questioned whether a solar project could have a different tax structure and asked if other towns have a different tax structure for solar. Ms. Noyes-Pulling will research this item. Ms. Noyes-Pulling stated Rutland Town combined the two types of preferred sites to make it easier and fairer to anyone who wants to request a certificate of public goods. Mr. Shank suggested Brandon move forward with one list and the smaller scale projects can have a caveat.

7. Discuss Electric Vehicle Day

This item was postponed for discussion at the September meeting.

8. Discuss Site/location of Charging Station

This item was postponed for discussion at the September meeting.

9. Discuss Educational Opportunities (OVUHS Partnership, Etc.)

This item was postponed for discussion at the September meeting.

10. Old/New Business

Lowell Rasmussen asked if GMP has done any integration studies in the Brandon area. He noted there could be times when there is a project that the utility company could say that it would not be an

appropriate project due to the impact on their lines. Barbara Noyes-Pulling advised there is a GMP map that is coded with three colors: red - no capacity, yellow – some capacity and green - wide open. Brandon is pretty much all green.

Michael Shank summarized that the Committee will lock in the language for the criteria list, Ms. Noyes-Pulling will resend the Rutland Town plan, Mr. Rasmussen will work on the 10th criteria and MOU, Ms. Sutton and he will meet with Dave Atherton, Elaine Smith and possibly Dick Kirby and Bob Dean to discuss possible preferred sites. Ms. Sutton's property will be the first on the list. The Committee will also schedule two workshops; Preparing for Winter and Transferring off Fossil Fuels.

11. Next Meeting

Next Meeting will be Monday, September 10, 2018 @ 5PM in the Brandon Town Hall

12. Adjournment

The Committee Chair adjourned the meeting at 6:04PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Charlene Bryant
Recording Secretary