

APPROVED

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HUNTINGTON PLANNING COMMISSION
Minutes September 26, 2016
Meeting with Energy Committee and CCRPC
Community Church of Huntington

PRESENT: Everett Marshall, Joe Segale, Mark Smith, Shayne Jaquith

ABSENT: Terry Ryan

OTHERS PRESENT: Regina Mahony and Melanie Needle (CCRPC), Ross Ogilvie and Dave Clark (Energy Committee)

MINUTES: Heidi Racht

6:45 pm Public Comment
Minutes of August 29, 2016 Meeting with Selectboard
Minutes of August 29, 2016
Minutes of September 12, 2016
Mail

7 pm Meet with Energy Committee and CCRPC

8 pm Discuss regulations update with CCRPC

8:45 Member Business

8:58 pm Adjourn

Public Comment: No public present.

Minutes:

August 29, 2016 meeting with Selectboard: Joe Segale moved to approve; Everett Marshall second. Approved unanimously with changes.

September 12, 2016: Joe Segale moved to approve; Everett Marshall second. Approved unanimously with changes.

August 29, 2016: Joe Segale moved to approve; Everett Marshall second. Approved unanimously with changes.

Mail: none.

Energy Plan:

After introductions were made, Melanie Needle of CCRPC gave the background on the evening's discussion. Currently underway is an enhanced regional energy plan. This includes an agreement with the Vermont Department of Public Service. Act 174, created in 2016 by the Vermont Legislature, sets a goal of having 90% of Vermont energy from renewable resource by 2050. With the plan produced by the Regional Planning Commission, towns that follow suit will have an enhanced substantial deference to Public Service projects. In other words, with a complementary and approved energy plan, the position of towns that oppose projects will be given more consideration by the PSB, a quasi-judicial body that issues a Certificate of Public Good and also set energy rates for utilities.

Substantial deference addresses a position on any land use policy, which will be given more consideration. Towns would have a greater role in siting of projects, - as long as the project doesn't outweigh the greater good.

The state is putting together energy plan and is a town supported to comply with greenness or other initiatives. The PSB might not be so forceful.

Needle added that the energy plan is required of regional planning commissions, but is not required of towns. Standards will have answers as to what a town needs to do to gain the positive determination of energy compliances.

Ross Ogilvie asked about what would happen if the town did not do this. Joe Segale responded that the town would not get to weigh in or say where someone might want to put a wind project. Mark Smith asked Needle why is it in the town's interest to have a positive energy plan, and she responded that this was to have greater weight and without this, any participation would follow the current model.

Segale asked about towns participating in hearings. Needle said that the PSB follows some At 250 criteria, mainly #10. It takes a lot of steps to be involved. "We don't know if you receive a positive determination; you can just submit a Town Plan."

Dave Clark asked if the town has no substantial deference, can a project developer "just do it?" Needle responded that a local energy plan would clearly articulate appropriate areas and where "you want to see them discouraged." Regina Mahony, added, "At a local level, people won't want it [big projects], but at the state level the PSB looks at the public good. Solar and wind farms have an impact."

Ogilvie changed the direction of the discussion asked if the purview of the Act was just energy production or "is it for conservation? If our plans includes acres of trees that are sequestering CO2, is that considered?" Needle responded, "We need to be identifying facilities for energy production and that there's a strategy." Maintaining a forest would be a component, "but it's not the main focus."

Ogilvie asked if rooftop solar is counted. And, Needle responded that it is.

Needle then discussed the regional plan, which considers the state goals of weatherizing 80,000 residences by 2025; 90% Vermont Energy from renewable sources (currently, it is 16% with 45% of this from Hydro Quebec); reducing consumption by a third.

She reviewed the timeline for adoption, which is 18 months:

1. Estimated goals for how much energy will be produced for 2050;
2. Energy generation;
3. Strategies

Clark mentioned that 6/10 of 1% would provide all US energy

There were questions about CSAs and whether these count.

Smith talked about how this energy plan is just about production and does not take into consideration social patterns, transportation and historic features. This plan “lacks holistic perspective.” He talked about how “projects in the Northeast Kingdom lacked this consideration. Politically, this has hurt renewable energy.”

Needle then showed maps that identify all possible energy generation sites. These do not consider the town’s goals.

Shane Jaquith pointed out that this all gets down to the Town Plan and public support. If something is currently in development, it could be in effect by May 2017.

Needle said that the wetlands buffers are not considered in the state’s constraints or on the maps now in place.

Objections were raised about timing of energy plans. Up to 2018, towns can go to the state. Mahony said that “we may be ok with more restrictive local plans, but we can’t have towns say ‘no’ to everything.”

Jaquith noted that every town has to “pull its weight.” He asked if the state goals allow for generation outside the town or even outside the state – like New York solar or wind farms.

Smith brought up his objections to the goals again, noting that this is “engineer driven, not culturally and socially” considered. “It’s limited and scary. Lots of us live in Vermont for lots of reasons that don’t have to do with energy. It is hard for a town to get its foot in the door. It is presented as negative. Turn it around: incentivize and help towns.” Going forward, the foundation is built with towns and their energy plans.

Ogilvie explained that the Energy committee worked to get a CSA in Huntington. Three-phase power is an obstacle. “We would like to participate, but things are out of our control.” Needle responded that the state was working with utilities and creating infrastructure.

Clark pointed out that Green Mountain Power doesn’t have CSAs, unless VELCO. He commented that GMP is holding a lot of the power. It was noted that VELCO doesn’t encourage and GMP was “capped.” Jaquith added that there are “bigger energy issues that this doesn’t affect.” Acts 173 does not get at scale or addressing details. It is giving towns a little more say as to where they don’t want power projects.”

Segale summarized that this is “Where we think it’s appropriate to site projects in Huntington? And say where we don’t want to see this.”

Marshall commented that Vermont needs to get its population under control, referring to a gubernatorial candidate’s goal to work to increase Vermont’s population. Smith asked how does conservation play into this. Needle restated the goal of a third less energy use.

Segale asked for a summary of what is needed by CCRPC and when.

Needle said, "Look at the regs for any constraints to energy development so we can take the amp one step further. Send us the language and maps.

Segale invited Needle to look at the town plan and pull out the information. Jaquith added that the base layer is "rudimentary."

Regulations update with Regina Mahony:

Mahony said she had read the draft of the text and was halfway through the illustrations and graphics. Samples. She pointed out that the document could be formatted in MS Word, which is text or Indesign, which would create a better document that will allow more graphics and visuals. The Commission decided to go with Word.

Segale asked how the Commission was going to address issues with back and forth comments.

Mahony had questions/comments about wastewater (Section 5.01) that might run into a "taking" issue; is it purposeful that site plans aren't a thing – it's more like special standards; discussion of timeline, with Smith suggesting a presentation at Town Meeting.

Member Business: None

Adjournment: Segale moved to adjourn; Jaquith second. The meeting adjourned at 9 pm.

Draft Minutes on town website: October 1, 2016, 2016

Unapproved Minutes to HPC: October 5, 2016

Minutes Approved: October 10, 2106

Minutes submitted to Town Clerk: October 13, 2016