

RPC_Minutes_2019.09.03

Planning Commission Members Present:

Stuart Levasseur
Bushrod Powers
Jim Rikert
Sarah Danly
Geo Honigford
Nell Gwin

Other Attendees:

Kimberly Gilbert, TRORC
Betsy Donahue, Royalton Resident

Minutes:

Meeting was called to order at 7:05 pm by Stuart Levasseur, Chair.

Miscellaneous business:

- The annual ANR municipal day will be at end of October
- Stuart Levasseur shared a letter from a resident opposed to the proposed solar array at Putting Down Roots Farm

Town Plan

The Commission focused on the Energy chapter and the new Enhanced Energy Planning Process.

- Kimberly Gilbert shared a list of planning standards that we need to meet and discussed the Enhanced Energy Status:
 - In the permitting considerations section, the plan gets to name preferred and prohibited locations, and the enhanced energy status gives your plan more say in the permitting process. Requirements must be met in order to earn enhanced energy status.
- The group began with edits to the existing Energy chapter.
 - Slight wording change to Goal 2
 - The group discussed the question of hydropower and noted that VT's grid overall uses hydropower in large quantities, but from Hydro Quebec not local generation.
 - Permitting is difficult and makes it less effective to have smaller facilities.
 - The technology does exist for microhydro to power individual households. But you need to be located very close to the generator to receive any usable energy.
 - The group noted that the regional plan does not address hydropower but nor does it preclude it.
 - There need to be updates to the energy map which shows one in-service hydro facility that has since been removed by the White River Partnership.

- Recommendation was added about EV charging stations at the proposed Park and Ride at Exit 3, and potentially within walking distance of the town green as well.
- Add language around not siting on prime ag soils and historic areas as well. Cite to other sections of the town plan.
- Betsy Donahue noted that there is a lot here about energy supply but not much about energy usage/efficiency. What have the town's actions been?
 - A recommendation was added that the town start an Energy committee.
 - It was discussed whether it would be possible for the town to collaborate with other nearby towns to leverage resources. Thetford and Hartford have done a lot and Barnard is interested in working with other towns.
- Data will be updated by TRORC. Some data is generalized over the entire state and clearly not applicable to Royalton (e.g. natural gas usage) and was removed.
- The group discussed wood heating as a strategy for reducing fossil fuel usage. It was also noted that this helps sustain a market for loggers, without which forest land owners will have more incentive to sell to developers. Kimberly will provide the language that was just added to the regional plan for the group's consideration.
- An out-of-date paragraph referring to VT Yankee was removed, but it was noted that since GMP purchases some nuclear, Vermont's portfolio does technically still include nuclear.
- Updates were made to the descriptions of types of energy, such as solar water heating and wind power.
- Language was added to include the concept of community based solar.
- Wording was clarified in sections around energy consumption reduction behaviors.
- A recommendation was added to educate about energy efficiency through the school system.
- Kimberly will provide for consideration some new additions to the regional plan about heat pumps.
- The group discussed Home Energy Audits and the suggestion to explore how the town can help, for example running a campaign to encourage residents to undergo the audits. This would be a good activity for the Energy Committee whose creation is being recommended.
- As a next step, Kimberly will cross-reference the updated version of the existing chapter with the requirements for enhanced energy status to determine what new portions still need to be drafted.

Closing

The Commission had 4 sets of draft minutes to approve. Geo Honigford motioned to approve all the minutes as written, Jim Rikert seconded, and the commission voted to approve.

Geo Honigford motioned to adjourn and Jim Rikert seconded. Meeting was adjourned at 8:35 pm.