

**Town of Grafton**

**Planning Commission**

Tuesday, November 14, 2017  
Grafton Town Garage

**MINUTES**

Planning Commissioners Present: Eric Stevens, Liisa Kissel, Kim Record, Matt Siano, Valerie Rooney, Chris Wallace, Chuck Wise (Land Use Coordinator)

Community Members Present: Sam Battaglino, Craig Ruggless, Daniel Michaelson, Charles Hooker, Carol Lind, Ron Pillette, Dave Muelrath, Kate Muelrath, Christine Tattersall, Sam Battaglino, Anita Siam

Call to order: 6:32PM

**Public Comment:**

Ron Pilette asked about an update on the status of the WRC letter requesting assistance on the energy chapter. Eric stated the letter is written and signed by the Planning Commission, the letter is with the Selectboard and it should be signed off by now. Kim reported that it was on Emily's desk and should be ready to send.

**Minutes: October 10, 2017- Motion to approve the minutes as corrected (Liisa 2<sup>nd</sup> Chris) PASSED**

**Subdivision update:** Robert Dowler proposed subdivision on Gib Lockerby Road

Chuck stated that last month the sketch plan review occurred and that we had every expectation of presenting the Planning Commissioners with a minor subdivision plan for review and approval this month. As we were preparing our submission, we encountered complications with the septic plans that will need to be clarified before moving forward. Right now, the septic designers are doing their work and as soon as that is complete, we will be moving forward with a public hearing.

**Town Plan Update:** The maps will be reviewed next month. The Flood Resiliency Chapter was reviewed and no further comments were made. The chapter is ready for public hearing.

Chuck reviewed the energy data that has been incorporated into an Energy Chapter template. The Windham Regional Commission prepared a template for towns to use if they want to develop an enhanced energy plan. The template was created by Windham Regional Commission after working closely with three pilot towns. The template includes places where data must be included. The data for Grafton was prepared by the Windham Regional Commission in three separate MS Excel spreadsheets. The spreadsheets include the town's energy needs for transportation, heating, and electricity usage. Chuck reviewed the MS

Excel datasets in detail. These excel sheets create an open architecture and allows anyone to understand how the data was collected, analyzed. Discussion followed.

Valarie asked about how home heating sources and costs are estimated. Most of the heating data is created by making estimates based on statewide averages and then scaled to the number of people and houses in Grafton.

Chuck asked about the relevance of wind generation in the community. There are industrial, commercial, and residential wind energy production. While industrial energy production is not appropriate, are there options like small-scale wind turbines for residences that can be appropriate? Discussion followed and consensus is that some small-scale wind production may be relevant to consider for the town but that wind energy production is not needed for the Town of Grafton because our region already has enough wind energy from projects elsewhere. The concern that was reiterated was a need to avoid industrial scale wind energy – not just a specific project but that the location itself is inappropriate for wind energy.

Liisa stated that the region is mostly focusing on solar for renewable energy production and some biomass. The data shows that approximately 6 acres of land in Grafton are needed to produce the needed amount of renewable energy.

Unanswered question - Sam asked about how are calculations made in the excel sheet to balance the offsets to newer renewable technologies. For example, an electric car does not use gasoline but does use energy from the home that was supplied by a power plant. How is the transfer of energy use from one source translated into energy consumption from another source? Eric stated the excel sheet should calculate how energy demand changes to another source. Chuck will ask WRC how this is factored in the MS Excel sheet.

Eric stated the conversion towards heat pumps is significant and the current conversion rate in the excel sheet probably does not account for the speed of this transfer. People are moving towards heat pumps much more rapidly than we expected would happen just a few years ago.

Liisa stated WRC worked with three towns - Londonderry, Westminster, and Vernon - to produced enhanced energy chapters. Now there is money for WRC to work with three new towns in the region and that a solicitation has been released. Grafton is applying to be a town selected for assistance and it is expected many other communities will be interested in this competitive selection process.

Ron Pillette indicated that the outlying years may have less relevance to the Town Plan. Our focus should be on the next 5-10-15 years when we can commit to making real progress on renewable energy generation and conservation.

Eric discussed the issues of storage as a way to make sure energy is available when it is needed. Utility companies are investing in large battery banks to make sure energy is available when it is needed. Green Mountain Power is doing a battery storage project in Rutland.

Chris wanted to know more about how WRC arrived at having renewable energy production limited to solar. Chuck will inquire about this and have an answer at the next meeting.

Discussion followed about Planning Commission or energy work group meeting frequency to address the energy chapter. Motion for the work group to meet two times before the next Planning Commission meeting and that the Energy Chapter is the first item on the agenda for the regular December meeting. (Valerie 2<sup>nd</sup> Kim) PASSED (1 opposed)

The requirements for public noticing a Town Plan Planning Commission hearing is an extensive process. The public hearing will most likely be advertised for January at the earliest.

**Mail:** None

**New Business:**

Eric reminded everyone to attend the VLCT meeting discussing the roles of the Selectboard and Planning Commission. The meeting starts at 5pm and lasts for two hours.

Eric discussed the solar project that is proposed by Rex James. It is not possible to identify this site as a preferred site which would give the project better standing and a higher per kilowatt per hour value (a preferred rate with Green Mountain Power). Discussion followed that it may be too early to make a determination based on the lack of information and not knowing how project abutters would react to this project. Eric discussed there is brownfields located on that site but it is not known where that is and if the site is still contaminated. Eric stated that what we know now about the project does conform to the Town Plan. Motion that the Grafton Planning Commission judges the solarfield proposed by Rex James comports with the Grafton Town Plan based on what we know of the site and pending verification that the site is not located on prime agricultural land. (Eric 2<sup>nd</sup> Kim) PASSED (1 opposed)

**Adjournment:** 9:26 PM

Next meeting: December 12, 2017