

WALLINGFORD ENERGY COMMITTEE

Minutes of the March 7, 2017 Meeting

Ken Welch called the meeting to order at 6:40. Present: John Armstrong, Doug Blodgett, Ken Welch and Jay White. Milton Moore joined the meeting at 7:00.

January and February Minutes. Jay moved the approval of the January and February minutes.

The Energy Section of the Town Plan. Ken proposed that we table the agenda he had distributed and devote the entire meeting to a discussion with Erika Berner, Chair of the Wallingford Planning Commission, about the new requirements for municipal energy planning under Act 174.

Jay began by expressing his concerns about the new requirements. "This seems onerous to me. It requires mapping and data and is much more ambitious than the kind of plan we have been working on for over five years. Now, I understand that we're going to get a grant to cover expenses and that most of the data will come from RROC [The Rutland Regional Planning Commission], but I'm still concerned."

Erika responded by saying that she was convinced that the new process will, in fact, make things easier. "There are two ways to write the energy section of a town plan," she explained. "We can write it any way we want, but writing it on our own means creating it from scratch. The key to the new process is that it's highly specified. RRPC will give us a template that we simply have to customize with our local preferences. In addition, if we follow these detailed guidelines and identify specifically how we will meet production and efficiency targets that are called for in the state energy plan, we may be given ['substantial deference'](#) before the PSB.

"We will get a lot of help from the RRPC. Barbara Noyes of RRPC has assured me that we will get the services of a consultant on her staff named Elyssa and that we will have all the data we need by April. Barbara has also assured me that Wallingford will not have to include industrial scale wind in its plan."

Erika urged interested member (and indeed, the public) to attend the monthly meetings of the RRPC Energy Committee on the third Tuesday of each month from 5:00 to 6:00 at RRPC headquarters on Merchants Row in Rutland.

Ken asks what will happen to what we have already written.

"I'm afraid it probably won't matter," Erika explained. "Town energy plans are no longer free standing documents but rather have to be a component of the overall town plan that the Planning Commission is currently revising — but I don't want to write the energy section. You are the people who understand these issues and the Planning Commission would like your help."

“What about cut and paste?” Ken asked. “Can we just take the language from the RRPC plan?”

“You can and you should.” Erika replied. “That’s the only way we can be sure that RRPC will approve our plan and that’s the way we’ll get substantial deference before the PSB.”

“There is a role for us,” John added. “There needs to be local input. For example, RRPC will identify sites that are appropriate for solar farms but only a small fraction of those sites will need to be developed in order to meet our energy production targets. The town gets to make those choices.”

Erika added that there are other issues we can address. “What happens to a solar farm after 25 or 30 years when the panels wear out? How do we make sure that the developer has downstream responsibilities?”

Jay brought up the Act 56 rules about screening and setbacks and Erika assured him that these will be reiterated in the town plan.

Ken asked whether GMP has been given input on which sites make sense from their point of view. “Yes,” Doug added, “if a site is good for us but not for GMP it won’t happen.” John recalled that one of the presenters at RRPC’s December meeting with municipal representatives was of the opinion that if a developer sees an opportunity, transmission lines simply become an element in the cost of the project.

“I think this is a great time for Wallingford.” Erika concluded. “What you want you can write. You can put teeth in it. You just have to make it based in data and consistent with the regional and state energy plans.”

Ken summed up. “I’m happy. I see light.”

Meeting was adjourned at 7:45. The next meeting will be on Tuesday, April 4 at 6:30.

— Submitted by John Armstrong