

WALLINGFORD ENERGY COMMITTEE

Minutes of the May 2, 2017 Meeting

Ken Welch called the meeting to order at 6:35. Present: John Armstrong, Doug Blodgett, Milton Moore, Ken Welch and Jay White.

April Minutes. Jay moved approval of the March minutes. There were no objections.

WES Dashboard. Ken reported that he and Gary Fredette had inventoried the monitoring equipment. Ken has also met with Oscar Daubenspeck, an electrician who believes that we have all the parts we need. John explained that he had reviewed the installation process and that most of it was planning, labeling and reporting sensor and load combinations to PowerWise. "This is work that can be done by us with the electrical boxes closed. We'll be able to economize on Oscar's time."

Solar News. Ken reported joining a group that went to Montpelier to lobby legislators about energy issues. While there, he learned that a solar developer hopes to sign an agreement with Pike Industries to build a solar farm on their unused quarry across Otter Creek from the Ames factory. [Rough measurements of this site on Google Earth suggest that it may have up to 25 acres of developable land. This could mean as much as 9 GWh/year of output or almost two thirds of the renewable electricity the state is asking Wallingford to produce by 2050.]

Energy Plan. The Rutland Regional Planning Commission (RRPC) recently released energy generation and conservation targets for each municipality in the region along with maps showing where different kinds of energy generation would be possible. Wallingford's Planning Commission has the option, after consulting the public, of selecting a small portion of these possible sites as preferred sites and also of defining places in Wallingford where renewable development would be constrained. John recalled that at a recent meeting at RRPC, some complained that offering maps of preferred sites will simply tell developers where to build. "That's exactly the point," John argued. "The maps is to show people where to build and have a relatively light regulatory burden. They also show people where *not* to build." Ken added that the maps were developed in consultation with the utilities. "If you can't get the electricity to the grid, what's the point?"

RRPC sent these draft maps out on May 1 and asked towns to respond by June 1 if they intend to apply additional constraints beyond RRPC's transmission and environmental constraints to development. Jay wondered how we could meet such a deadline. "We can't get something to the Wallingford Planning Commission in time for their meeting next week, and even if we could, it would have to be circulated before we could submit something to RRPC."

"I think they understand that they can't expect final regulations so fast," John commented. "I think they just want a heads up that we do plan to add additional constraints." Doug argued that these should include historical areas and also "highly aesthetic" areas. Jay added that the historical issues have been already been addressed in his draft for the solar portion of the energy plan the committee has been working on. Ken suggested that we submit a notice of intent. "What's the harm?" John offered to supply this notice in reply to an email from Barbara Noyes Pulling of RRPC.

Public Meeting about Enhanced Energy Planning. At its April 10 meeting, the Wallingford Planning Commission discussed a town dinner and meeting on June 12 at the Rotary Building. John telephoned into this meeting and reported that Elysa Smigielski of the RRPC explained that this meeting would discuss all aspects of revision to the town plan — except energy. She wants our committee to take on that task and host a second public forum before the end of June.

John believes this is feasible. "I did some outlining and I think there is a fairly straightforward way to present these issues." He promised to distribute a draft slide show to the committee by the end of the week of May 8.

"That's fine — but if we hold a meeting will anyone come?" Ken asked. [The secret may lie in what the planning commission is going to do: serve dinner. There may be funds for this in the planning grant from RRPC.]

Doug agreed that it was time to inform people. "But passing out maps makes me shudder. Everyone will instantly focus on their own property."

"And their neighbor's." Jay added. "I can control what happens on my property — but not on John's." (Structures on John's property could potentially block Jay's view of Otter Creek and the mountains.)

Doug reminded us that some will see the presence of “prime solar” on their property as an opportunity. “I also think we need to make it clear that these are not our maps. They from the state and the region. People need to know that we have not had a chance to pass final judgment on them and that we welcome public comment.”

Ken reported that the Cavendish energy committee has chosen not to file an enhanced energy plan. “That’s their right,” Doug replied, “but it means they will have no say when projects go before the PSB.”

John suggested that we explain that Wallingford can meet the state’s 2050 generation targets with a relatively modest impact on our landscape: 30 – 40 acres of large scale solar; about 100 backyard windmills, and panels on about half of the roofs. He also recommended that we remind people that local production means local money.

It’s bewitching hour,” Ken concluded.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:55. The next meeting will be on Tuesday, June 5 at 6:30.

— Submitted by John Armstrong