

## *Minutes of the East Montpelier Planning Commission*

***Approved 4/20/23***

April 6, 2023

PC Members Present: Zach Sullivan (Chair), Maia Stone, Richard Hall, Clarice Cutler, Nikhil Khosla, Gianna Petito (zoom), Kim Watson, Mark Lane

Others Present: Deirdre Connelly, Lynn Novak, Henry Novak

**Call to Order:** 7:04 pm

**Changes to Agenda:**

None.

**Public Comment:**

None.

**Review Minutes**

The group reviewed the March 16, 2023 minutes and made a few edits for clarity.

**Motion: To approve the March 16, 2023 minutes with tonight's amendments.** Made by Ms. Cutler, second by Ms. Watson. Passed unanimously.

**Election of Officers**

Chair- Mr. Sullivan nominated by Ms. Stone; elected acclamation.

Vice Chair- Ms. Cutler nominated by Mr. Khosla; elected by acclamation.

Secretary- Ms. Watson nominated by Ms. Petito; elected by acclamation.

**Motion: To designate Ms. Connelly as recording clerk. Made by Ms. Watson, second by Mr. Khosla.** Passed unanimously.

**Adopt Rules of Procedure**

Ms. Petito mentioned she was interested in developing a land acknowledgement and noted that the group could reopen the rules later in the year if the group wanted to adopt one.

Ms. Cutler noted that the legislature passed a new code of ethics for state employees that now includes both conflicts of interest and the appearance of conflicts of interest. Mr. Khosla commented that it can be hard to define the appearance of a conflict of interest. Mr. Sullivan commented that the PC doesn't have a conflict of interest policy beyond the policy for town employees, and he was unsure about adopting a PC-specific policy. Ms. Watson suggested that the appearance of conflicts is implied in the policy and that there is a slight distinction because PC members are elected, rather than appointed.

**Motion: To approve rules of procedure as presented.** Made by Ms. Cutler, second by Ms. Stone. Passed unanimously.

### **Discuss Siting Section of Energy Plan**

Mr. Sullivan suggested the group discuss the siting section of the Energy plan because it is in the PC's purview and he asked the group for their ideas on the goals of energy siting. Ms. Cutler mentioned that the PC spent a lot of time working on siting in past drafts of the Town Plan and suggested that the current siting information in the Town Plan might be sufficient. Mr. Sullivan agreed, but suggested the PC dig into what parts of the town could be used for energy generation and whether the town has enough. He added that to meet the 2035 target the town would need roughly 14 megawatts of generating capacity and if solar is at eight acres per megawatt, it would take 112 acres to reach that goal.

Ms. Cutler suggested looking at energy plans from other towns to see how they have addressed siting and particularly to look at how they have addressed prohibited sites. Ms. Petito suggested performing an analysis on preferred sites to see if there is sufficient acreage with buffers.

Mr. Sullivan wondered about the emphasis on kilowatts and whether it would be more effective to talk about the size of the array rather than the output. Ms. Cutler added that it can be hard to visualize what a kilowatt looks like. Mr. Khosla asked if the group was trying to address size, scale, optics, or some combination. He added that solar panels can put out electromagnetic interference, which might be something else to consider. Mr. Hall pointed out that kilowatts are an industry standard and using something else might mean readers have to translate between different measurements. Ms. Petito agreed with Mr. Hall's point and noted that solar panels are getting smaller and more efficient, so the footprint of the arrays will naturally get smaller over time.

Mr. Sullivan asked if the siting section should include examples the group considers well-executed. Ms. Watson suggested including farm and industrial rooftops as an example.

Mr. Hall asked if the group knows where the town is current with solar generation versus where it was when the Town Plan was written. He suggested that the data could help the group project forward to 2035. Mr. Sullivan did not have the latest information on solar generation, but mentioned the Energy committee will be meeting with Sam Lash soon and could also request that information from the Public Utility Commission ("PUC").

Mr. Sullivan commented that he'd heard that developers were looking for towns with completed energy plans to approach for development opportunities. Mr. Khosla commented that looking at past growth and projecting forward could be helpful, but it sounded like preparing for future development was an important consideration. Mr. Khosla asked if the town had any incentives for landowners with preferred sites. Ms. Watson thought there was an incentive for new development.

Mr. Sullivan suggested the group send the current constraints to the RPC and ask them to map it so the group can see how much land they are discussing. The group agreed that was a good next step. Mr. Khosla suggested the group also reach out to the PUC about current solar generation in the town.

### **Discuss requests to be made of Energy Committee**

Mr. Sullivan mentioned he'd like to schedule a joint PC-Energy committee meeting soon, but asked if there were any specific requests the PC would like to make. Ms. Watson asked if the Energy committee agreed that the energy plan should be incorporated into the Town Plan. Mr. Sullivan said they are leaning more toward a separate energy plan.

Ms. Watson will attend the next Energy committee meeting on 4/10 and Mr. Hall will attend the Energy committee meeting on 4/24.

### **Updates**

- **Capital Improvement Committee-** Ms. Watson reported that the group is scheduled to meet 4/13. They will look for priorities and reach out to committees for input.
- **Energy Committee-** Mr. Sullivan reported that the group met on 27<sup>th</sup> and is jumping right into their work. They are looking at the Municipal Energy Resilience Program for grants and assessments for town buildings.
- **Resilient Roads Committee-** Mr. Lane reported that the group has selected a vendor for the ash tree removal this year. Mr. Khosla asked how the group chooses roads to prioritize for tree removal. Mr. Lane explained that they focus on quieter roads and look for the trees at the greatest risk for falling.
- **Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission-** Ms. Cutler mentioned that the next meeting will be 4/11. She reported that the fundamentals workshop mentioned the Municipal Energy Resilience Program and that the FEMA flood maps will be updated soon. Once the town has the new maps from FEMA, they will need to update the regs. The 4/11 meeting will be focused on connectivity and food assets in central Vermont. Ms. Cutler added that TA Jenkins is looking for someone to be the town rep to CVRPC. Ms. Stone volunteered to fill in when Ms. Cutler can't attend meetings, but was unsure of her availability long-term.

### **ZA Report**

None.

### **DRB Report**

No meeting this month, no updates.

### **Other Business**

Ms. Petito reported that she spoke with representatives from the village wastewater grant program and the drinking water revolving loan fund. The person from the wastewater program is available to attend the 5/4 PC meeting and the person from the drinking water program is available to attend the 4/20 PC meeting. Both reps asked if the group has specific questions; PC members should send questions to Ms. Petito to pass along.

**Motion: To adjourn.** Made by Ms. Watson, second by Ms. Petito. Passed unanimously.

Meeting closed at 8:35 p.m.

*Respectfully submitted by Deirdre Connelly.*