

# UNDERHILL PLANNING COMMISSION

Thursday, November 15, 2018 @ 6:00 PM

## Minutes

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### Attendance

#### **Planning Commissioners:**

Commissioner Johnathan Drew, Vice Chair  
Commissioner Nancy Bergersen  
Commissioner David Edson  
Commissioner Patrick Lamphere  
Commissioner John "Kail" Romanoff  
Commissioner Cynthia Seybolt  
Commissioner Lea Van Winkle  
Commissioner Sandy Wilmot

#### **Staff/Municipal Representatives:**

Andrew Strniste, Planning Director  
Peter Bennett, Energy Committee Member  
Michael Oman, Energy Committee Member  
Ruth Machell Julianelle, Energy Committee Member  
Steve Webster, Energy Committee Member

#### **Others Present:**

Sam Carlson, Green Lantern Group

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[5:55] Members of the Planning Commission started to convene at Underhill Town Hall around 5:55 pm.

[6:01] Vice Chair J. Drew called the meeting to order.

[6:01] Vice Chair J. Drew asked for public comment. No public was in attendance, and therefore, no public comment was provided.

### **AGENDA ITEM: GREEN LANTERN DEVELOPMENT, LLC (SAM CARLSON) – DISCUSSION ABOUT SOLAR ARRAY ON BEARTOWN ROAD GRAVEL PIT**

[6:02] Sam Carlson, from Green Lantern Development, was before the Commission to discuss the potential solar array that was to be situated on the Beartown Road gravel pit – Town owned land. He advised that Green Lantern Development handled commercial scale net metering solar arrays, which are typically located on one to four acres and produce between 150 to 500 kilowatts. He advised that net metering provides that electricity goes into the grid. At that point, Green Mountain Power issues net-metering credits, and then sells those credits to towns, schools, large commercial developments, etc. Those credits are then used to pay down the respected electricity bill. Mr. Carlson inform the Commission that Green Lantern Development contains 60 sites across the State of Vermont, and that they work collaboratively with Town. The proposed project at Beartown Road would contain a 20/25 year lease with the Town, which would also allow the Town to tax the solar arrays. Mr. Carlson advised that he was before the Planning Commission in part because the of the Energy Committees recommendation to consider the gravel pit/disposal facility for the solar array (a one-acre solar array). Upon being installed, the electricity would be transmitted through the single-phase line and follow the critical path of feasibility (though a feasibility study would need to be conducted to determine how many kilowatts could be added to the grid). Mr. Carlson advised that typically a single-phase line could handle up 150 kilowatts. He then informed the Commission that his company would not apply to Green Mountain Power until the Planning Commission provided its feedback. Mr. Carlson then advised that the Planning Commission was asked to consider the gravel pit a preferred location. Currently, the site is considered a disposal facility, and is therefore not considered a preferred site in the eyes of the Public Utilities Commission. As a result, Green Lantern Development would lose one cent per kilowatt/hour over the life of the lease. Should the Commission consider the Beartown Road

gravel pit a preferred site, Green Lantern Development would get the one-cent per kilowatt hour back over the life of the lease.

- [6:14] Commissioner Van Winkle inquired about the cap, and in response, Energy Committee Member Steve Webster advised that the Town did not know what was under the cap. Commissioner Wilmot asked Staff Member Strniste how the proposed solar array conformed with the map developed Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission illustrating prime solar areas. Vice Chair J. Drew asked Mr. Carlson about the impact of the solar array. Commissioner Lamphere informed the Commission that he knew that the abutting neighbor to the west would be opposed. Commissioner Seybolt inquired about potential easements and utility lines. Mr. Carlson answered that there would be one line and one new pole. In response to a question about access, Mr. Carlson advised that the access way would need to be upgraded, and once built, there would likely be two visits a year.
- [6:20] Vice Chair J. Drew inquired about the potential of more energy generation at the site. Mr. Carlson answered that Green Lantern would be restricted by the single-phase line. In response to a question about another potential 150 kwh solar array on the site, Mr. Carlson advised that the Public Utilities Commission would probably view the entire site as a 300 kwh facility. Commissioner Lamphere made a clarification point about the proposed road to be used to access the solar array, advising that there was no existing drive, and that an access permit would need to be obtain. Mr. Carlson advised that Green Lantern would pursue the necessary permits. A discussion ensued about the ability of someone else constructing a solar array. Mr. Carlson responded by advising that the construction of this array may inhibit another 150 kwh site (or large scale); however, will unlikely inhibit 4 to 6 kwh projects, which are more associated with residential arrays. Mr. Lamphere then advised that based on his understanding of the property, the site was probably not a stump dump.
- [6:24] Energy Committee Member Ruth Machell Julianelle advised that there was a second transmission line along Beartown Road which could be considered. Commissioner Seybolt inquired about the property being used for other uses, as well as inquired about how large the property was, which was determined to be 11 acres. Mr. Carlson then advised that Green Lantern would be leasing one acre from the Town with a utility easement, and in return, the Town would agree not to shade the array. Vice Chair J. Drew inquired about the life of each array. Mr. Carlson advised that the life of each array was 25 years, and was warrantied for 25 years. He then advised that once the array was approved and permitted, they would go into the market. Mr. Carlson informed the Board that each panel loses production by approximately 0.5% each year. Green Lantern would also be responsible for decommissioning and return the site to its original site, minus the replanting of any trees. He then advised that there is also a vegetative management agreement. Mr. Carlson then informed the Commission that he could not assure the Commission that the project management area would only be contained to the Town owned land into the future.
- [6:32] Energy Committee Chair Peter Bennett advices that the gravel pit was chosen as a location for the solar array since nothing is occurring on the land, and that for the most part, the project would not be visible when traveling along Beartown Road. While the Alexanders may see the array, Energy Committee Chair Bennett advised that they seemed to be amenable, especially is trees were planted.
- [6:36] Commissioner Seybolt inquired about the rental fees. Mr. Carlson advised that their company was chosen as the result of a request for proposal. Commission Seybolt then inquired about how much money the Town will save. Mr. Carlson advised that an analysis has not been performed yet; however, only Green Mountain Power costs will be offset. Energy Committee Member

Webster informed the Commission that the Energy Committee estimated that Town Hall uses approximately 28,000 kwh per year, and therefore, 10% would represent the costs savings. Energy Committee Chair advised estimated that the Town could potentially save between \$3000-\$5,000 per year. Commissioner Lamphere inquired about the length of the lease and about the potential emergence of new technology. Mr. Carlson advised that the lease is currently for a 20-year minimum with three 5 year options to extend. Should the advancement of technology occur, that would increase the value of equipment and the value of the lease.

[6:41] A consensus among the Commission was attained in supporting the solar array project at the gravel pit on Beartown Road. Commissioner Bergersen made a **motion to support the solar array project, and consider the Beartown Road gravel a preferred site**. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Van Winkle and **approved unanimously**. Mr. Carlson advised that the process takes approximately a year. Energy Committee Chair Bennett advised that there is a public process for abutting neighbors to make comments.

**AGENDA ITEM: 2020 TOWN PLAN – FORUM GROUP 1 (LAND USE; NATURAL RESOURCES; HISTORICAL & CULTURAL RESOURCES) DISCUSSION**

[6:44] Vice Chair J. Drew informed the Commission and Energy Committee that the two handouts were based on the information they knew of. He then informed the Commission that he and Commissioner Wilmot reviewed the 2015 Town Plan and previous surveys. Vice Chair J. Drew then provided an overview of the chart that was provided during the hearing.

[6:57] After reviewing the chart, Energy Chair Bennett advised that a lot of change since the implementation of the 2015 Town Plan. For example Act 174 was passed by the Vermont legislature allowing Towns to have a say in renewable energy siting if the Town has an enhanced energy plan. He then advised that the Energy Committee see themselves as a technical assistance committee, and that they do not want to be involved in writing regulation. Energy Committee Webster advised that the language in the 2015 Town Plan focuses on reducing energy consumption, and that there should be a shift to focusing on renewable resources. Commissioner Edson advised that the Commission should consider the cost to the landowner with the implementation of more requirements.

[7:02] Energy Committee Chair Bennett provided an overview of what tasks the Energy Committee have been completed listed in the Town Plan. In response to one of the implementation tasks, he opined that the biomass is not carbon neutral, and as a result, he and various members of the Energy Committee had difficulty supporting biomass as a renewable resource. Commissioner Wilmot rebutted the assertion about biomass, specifically advising that new technology is allowing for the extraction of more energy.

[7:07] Energy Committee Chair Bennett informed the Commission that the Energy Committee was working on educating residents. He then provided an update on the P.A.C.E. program.

[7:12] A discussion ensued about the enhanced energy planning data supplied by Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission. Vice Chair. J. Drew advised that the Commission was going to wait until the 2020 Town Plan to address the enhance energy component of the plan. A discussion ensued about building a database in order to create more accurate targets. Vice Chair J. Drew suggested that time and resources should be allocated towards finding out what Underhill uses rather than based on datasets. In response to an inquiry of the Town substituting their goals with the goals of Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission, Energy Committee Member Oman advised that the substitution will depend on how far the goals deviate from one another.

Energy Committee Chair Bennett informed the Commission that in order to achieve the 90% by 2050 goal, resolving the issue of energy storage will be necessary. Commissioner Seybolt suggested that the Selectboard should task Town Staff for record keeping of certain data to assist with data gathering for the various boards/commissions/committees. A discussion ensued about the requirements for energy efficient buildings. Commissioner Seybolt advised that the Planning Commission rejected the idea because the implementation of the regulations would be too burdensome. Energy Committee Member advised that the Commission could meet the goal of attaining electric car charges by placing a regulation in the parking regulations. Commissioner Seybolt advised that the Town did not have parking regulations.

[7:27] Energy Committee Chair Bennett objected to an assertion made in the minutes from the previous set of draft minutes (November 8, 2018), specifically the following text:

“[7:16] Commissioner Van Winkle asked clarification questions about the proposed solar array at the Beartown Road gravel pit. Conservation Commissioner Chair McKnight advised that a solar array could not be erected at New Road because the array would be operated by the Vermont Electric Coop, and as a result, only the garage, and not other Town facilities, would be able to utilize the energy created. Conservation Commissioner Steinbaurer provided additional information about why the solar array could not be erected on top of the capped landfill.

Energy Committee Chair Bennett submitted an email (dated April 10, 2018) into the record, which states the reason the Conservation Commission did not favor the Crane Brook area:

1. Wildlife habitat disturbance.
2. The integrity of the landfill.
3. The belief the solar array would further degrade the area.
4. And the installation.

The minutes of November 8, 2018 would have to be revisited, with a reminder that the minutes were a reflection of the remarks said at that specific meeting. Not necessarily the accuracy of the reasons provided outside of that evening's meeting. Vice Chair J. Drew asked the Energy Committee to review the survey questions and provide feedback. The Commission then reviewed the upcoming schedule:

- November 29, 2018 – Commissioners Gregson and Bergersen will present their forum group topic;
- December 13, 2018 – Forum Group 1 (Land Use) and Forum 3 (Energy) will complete their presentations.

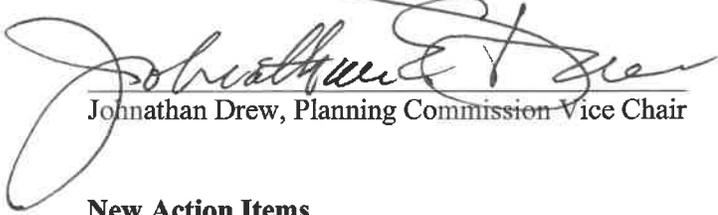
Approval of the minutes will occur at the next Planning Commission meeting.

[7:38] Commissioner Edson made a **motion to adjourn**. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Bergersen and **approved unanimously**.

Respectfully Submitted By:

Andrew Strniste, Planning Director

The minutes of the ~~November 15, 2018~~ meeting were accepted this 29<sup>th</sup> day of November, 2018.



Johnathan Drew, Planning Commission Vice Chair

**New Action Items**

- Staff Member Strniste: Make ten (10) copies of the Natural Resource section of the Town Plan to distribute to the Conservation Commission.
- Staff Member Strniste: Email Natural Resources section of the Town Plan to Steve Webster.

**Old, Incomplete Action Items**

- Staff Member Strniste: Provide materials pertaining to the zoning pamphlet in the coming weeks.
- Staff Member Strniste: Providing a map of where the capital projects are located.
- Staff Member Strniste: Obtain a report on how Selectboard Member Johnson derived at the funding sources (i.e.) for the identified capital projects.
- Chair C. Gregson: Write letter to Commissioner Glidden regarding his resignation
- Commission: Review memorandum from Transportation Board.
- Forum Group: Each forum group write as many survey questions as possible.
- Commission: Review Town Plan sections that were volunteered and develop presentation materials for discussion at upcoming Planning Commission meetings.

**Completed Action Items**