

Town of New Haven Planning Commission Hearing on Draft Energy Plan and Regular Meeting
Draft Minutes
Monday, December 14, 2020
Remote Meeting

This meeting was held remotely via GoToMeeting.

Planning Commission Members Present: Co-Chair Benj Putnam, Kathy Cahill, Bev Landon, and Maggie Eaton

Absent: Co-Chair Rob Litch and Pat Palmer

Staff: Zoning Administrator Aaron Brown

Visitors: Kathy Barrett, Peggy Conor, Susan Smiley, Doug Tolles, Jim Walsh

A video recording of the meeting is available at

<https://transcripts.gotomeeting.com/#/s/cd1b854b1500f64c4a3e600573b9c7c051688cc2aee54a9aaa0d9d4e39365dd8>.

I. Call to Order

6:00 PM

Benj Putnam called to order a public hearing on the proposed energy plan. He and Aaron Brown discussed the logistics for voting on the energy plan, and Putnam explained he thought the vote to move the plan forward should occur during the regular public meeting.

II. Energy Plan Hearing

Maggie Eaton provided the presentation available at

<https://www.dropbox.com/s/9ccgd5pgh02fq2b/New%20Haven%20Energy%20Plan%20Slides%2012-14-20.pptx?dl=0>. The presentation explains the reasons for updating the town energy plan (ex: substantial deference under state public utility commission proceedings), evidence behind climate change, current energy use in Vermont and New Haven, and existing renewable energy production.

Susan Smiley asked if calculations for greenhouse gas reductions include current use lands in New Haven and elsewhere. Eaton responded that information has been difficult to obtain. Smiley suggested included information on distribution opportunities and constraints, as there is a statewide map. Eaton added there are regional maps as well. Smiley said local maps would be of interest to landowners as they could better understand their renewable potential. Eaton added that they also need to understand constraints, such as transmission capacity limits.

Jim Walsh suggested, on page 43 of the plan – standards of siting and installation of projects, that the sentence be paired down because it seems long, open-ended, and prone to different interpretations by different Selectboards and Planning Commissions. Eaton said that the language in question is required by the state. Walsh then moved to page 43 – historical working landscapes – and Eaton explained that the table therein lays out renewable energy targets to year-specific goals. It's plan-specific, not site-specific. Smiley asked if the intent is not to restrict one individual site review differently than another, and Eaton

said yes. Putnam suggested wording it more positively that all projects will be judged by standards of this plan.

Walsh pointed to page 45 – mitigation methods – that screening is now imposed on the property owner. He said that could complicate matters, for example, for a farmer who leases land to a developer. He suggested that developers should remain responsible for screening.

Walsh commented that community and industrial scale wind is not feasible in New Haven (page 46 of the draft plan). Eaton agreed that current technology is not feasible, but technology continues to change.

Smiley asked what baseline generation means, and Eaton responded that's the energy currently generated as of January 1, 2017.

Doug Tolles announced he has a lot of comments but would try not to monopolize air time. He said the group can not vote on the plan during a public hearing and he could not find an agenda for the public meeting on the website. Tolles argued that the commission should have held hearings prior to writing any language.

1. Adjustments to Agenda

The group decided not to hold its regular meeting because the agenda, while on the website under "Community Calendar," did not appear on the agenda page.

III. Adjourn

Putnam said he believed there was no need for a motion to adjourn because no regular meeting took place.

Respectfully Submitted,
Aaron Brown