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Town of New Haven
PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING
REMOTE Public Meeting
Wednesday, January 20, 2021
Meeting Minutes

Planning Commission Members Present via Remote:

Co-chairs Benj Putnam and Rob Litch; Maggie Eaton, Bev Landon, Pat Palmer, Kathy Cahill

Staff Present via Remote:

Aaron Brown, Zoning Administrator & Town Administrator

Peggy Connor: Minutes

Kathy Barrett: Selectboard member

Visitors Present via Remote:

Amanda Bodell

I. Call to Order:

Co-chair Benj Putnam called the remote meeting to order at 7:05 p.m.

1. Adjustments to Agenda:

Benj Putnam noted that he had received a request from Susan Smiley to add an agenda item on the Conservation Commission for next month's meeting.

2. Visitors' Business:

Amanda Bodell recognized the Energy Committee for their work on the updated Energy Plan for the town, and thanked them for their efforts.

II. Zoning Administrator Update

Aaron Brown reported that he has received the first building permit application from Silver Maple Construction for a shed to cover a water pump. Also, the Development Review Board last week approved the Hardy 3-lot subdivision located on Pearson Road, and there are two potential sketch plans coming before the DRB for minor subdivisions.

III. Energy Committee Update:

Maggie Eaton suggested that the Energy Committee Update be made a permanent agenda item as there have been a significant number of changes to the Energy Plan draft, and more are expected. Maggie provided the following update:

- Attended Addison County Energy Roundtable on wood pellets.
- Met with ACORN representative on renewable energy projects and learned that GMP is considering a substation feasibility study on the Hewlett Road transformer substation, which serves a number of New Haven residents.
- Learned that the Bristol Energy Solar Project recently secured a Series A investor from Middlebury for a 12-acre capped landfill site on which 1,840 solar panels are being proposed on 3+ acres.
- Follow-up conversation with Alex DePillis from the Vermont Agency of Agriculture, an expert in combining agricultural use with solar panel installations. Both he and John Roberts of the Champlain Valley Farmers Coalition confirmed that in many cases, the financial benefit to farmers for leasing land for large-scale solar is greater than traditional farm use.
- Responded to inquiries made by Susan Smiley at last month's hearing; and have outstanding inquiries from Silver Maple Construction and Michael Butler at GMP regarding standard form contract language in lease agreements between solar developers and farmers.
- Signed up to receive updates on the Vermont Comprehensive Energy Plan.

- 56 ■ Spoke with solar development consultant Chris Byers and discussed his efforts working
57 with farmers to consider installing solar panels, as well as the status of the Sawyer Road
58 project.
- 59 ■ Received an energy report card from Addison County Regional Planning Commission
60 (available on town's website) showing the progress made by municipalities on their
61 approved energy plans based on data collected from GMP and Efficiency Vermont
62 through 2019. The Town of New Haven received an overall 'B' grade. It was noted that
63 in an effort to encourage continued progress toward energy goals, no town received a
64 grade lower than 'C'.
65

66 **IV. Next Steps: Town Enhanced Energy Plan for Selectboard Review:**

67 Planning Commission members reviewed the timeline prepared by Town Attorney Cindy
68 Hill, and noted the various outreach strategies used to inform the public of the proposed
69 Energy Plan, including the Town's website, Front Porch Forum, newsletters, notification
70 to surrounding towns, and a presentation at last year's Town Meeting. In going forward,
71 another public hearing will be properly noticed for Monday, March 8, 2021, to be
72 followed by a regular Planning Commission meeting for a final vote prior to sending the
73 proposed plan to the Selectboard for review and to schedule a public vote at a special
74 town meeting.
75

76 Maggie Eaton suggested that she make a presentation on the proposed Energy Plan at
77 the upcoming Town Meeting; however, Kathy Barrett noted that this year's Town
78 Meeting had already been warned, and due to constraints as a result of the ongoing
79 pandemic, there will be no discussion other than on those Articles to be voted on by
80 Australian ballot. It was agreed to continue keeping the public informed by inviting
81 people to public hearings, utilizing Front Porch Forum, the Town's newsletter, and
82 including updates on the Town's website, where changes to the plan are highlighted in
83 yellow.
84

85 Maggie Eaton moved to schedule the public hearing on the proposed Energy Plan for March 8,
86 2021; Pat Palmer seconded.
87

88 **MOTION PASSED BY UNANIMOUS VOICE VOTE**
89

90 **V. Minutes - November 9 and December 14, 2020**

91 Benj Putnam noted a typo on Amanda Bodette's last name in the November 9th minutes.
92 Maggie Eaton suggested that the meeting minutes for both November 9th and December 14th
93 include greater detail, especially regarding the Energy Plan in an effort to be transparent and
94 more informative to the public. Maggie had sent her recommended revisions to Aaron and Benj
95 for consideration. It was agreed that both sets of minutes with recommended changes be
96 distributed to all members for review and defer approval until the Commission's February
97 meeting.

98 **Approval of Meeting Minutes DEFERRED**
99

100 Pal Palmer moved to adjourn; Kathy Cahill seconded.
101

102 **MOTION PASSED BY UNANIMOUS VOICE VOTE**
103

104 Meeting adjourned at 7:47 p.m.
105

106 Respectfully submitted,
107 Peggy Connor