

Mendon Planning Commission Minutes (Final)
July 1, 2019

Present: Justin Lindholm and Teri Corsones were present. The draft June 3, 2019 minutes were approved as written.

Mendon Town Plan Review: Amanda O'Connor from the Rutland Regional Planning Commission briefly reviewed the feedback that the Community Committee had provided on June 18 regarding the proposed Mendon Town Plan. The feedback included clarification about: (1) snowmaking ponds in the City Forest Area (Teri confirmed with Rutland City DPW Commissioner Jeff Wennberg that the City would permit snowmaking ponds in the City Forest Area); (2) ski area development in the Ski District (Larry Courcelle recommended revisions to address historical context for the reference); (3) Tamarack Notch Trail plans (Teri confirmed with Lisa Thornton at the Vermont Dep't of Forests, Parks and Recreation that the Department is working to improve accessibility of the existing Trail with the possibility of expanding the Trail in the future); (4) descriptions of the Long Trail (Teri confirmed that the Long Trail is the oldest long-distance hiking trail in the United States); and (5) the Future Land Use Map (Amanda indicated that the RRPC is updating the map to make it easier to see the difference between City lands and Conserved Forest lands).

Amanda spelled out the notice requirements for the Mendon Planning Commission Public Hearing that is scheduled for Monday, August 5 at 6:30 p.m. at the Mendon Town Office. The purpose of the hearing is to afford public input about the Proposed Mendon Town Plan. Teri will coordinate with the Town Office staff to send the requisite notice packet (including the proposed plan, a hearing notice, a report and a solicitation for comments) to the RRPC, to the planning commission chairs of adjoining towns, and to the Department of Housing and Community Development. In addition, the notice is to be published in the Rutland Herald and posted in three public places. Copies of the proposed Mendon Town Plan are also to be made available at the Town Office, at the Town Garage, and on the Town's website.

Enhanced Energy Plan: Barbara Noyes Pulling, Senior Planner at the Rutland Regional Planning Commission, was present to explain the basics involved in Enhanced Energy Plans. Barbara provided several documents for members' review: a Mendon Municipal Energy Summary; a GMP Solar Map; a "Solar Energy Potential" map based on Public Service Department Requirements; the Brandon Enhanced Energy Plan; and the Town of Rutland Municipal Plan updated on March 28, 2019.

Barbara explained that an important consequence of a town adopting an Enhanced Energy Plan is that in the event a proposed development is the subject of a Public Utility Commission (PUC) review, the town's position would receive "substantial deference", instead of "due consideration". However, she also explained that the exact meaning of "substantial deference" in that context is unclear. The PUC can still make decisions "for

the greater good of the state”, irrespective of a town’s position. Once an Enhanced Energy plan is adopted, it could either become the Energy section of the town’s town plan, or it could be a stand-alone plan.

Municipal enhanced energy plans are required to contain an analysis of current energy resources, needs, costs and problems across all energy sectors, including electric, thermal and transportation. Action plans should address conservation, electrical usage and land use.

Barbara pointed out that the Solar Energy Potential document depicts a number of prime solar spots along Route 4 in Mendon. Given the Legislature’s desire for 90% renewable energy by 2050, Mendon’s renewable energy target goal is 90 acres. Justin indicated that there are questions about the feasibility of the Legislature’s goal. Barbara suggested that the MPC may want to identify “preferred sites” and “non-preferred sites” for Mendon’s target acreage for solar sites. Justin suggested that one possibility for preferred sites that would not impact Mendon’s viewsheds is the Rutland City Forest. Teri will connect with Jeff Wennberg to preliminarily explore that possibility.

If Mendon pursues an Enhanced Energy Plan, an Energy Committee would need to be formed and considerable work would need to be done. Barbara offered to bring templates for the work to the September meeting. She also offered to connect with Middlebury College about the possibility of a class there doing a viewshed analysis in Mendon. She will also look at data that has been gathered in the past regarding Mendon residents’ input regarding viewsheds. Teri and Justin expressed their gratitude to Barbara for sharing her considerable expertise regarding Enhanced Energy Plans.

The next meeting of the Mendon Planning Commission is scheduled for Monday, August 5 at 5:15 p.m. at the Mendon Town Office, followed by the Public Hearing described above scheduled for 6:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Teri Corsones