

## Shaftsbury Planning Commission (PC)

August 30, 2023

In person at Cole Hall and remotely via Zoom

### 1. Call to order

The meeting came to order at 6:03 p.m. Present were commissioners Naomi Miller (chair), Nancy Burns, Mike Foley, Chris Williams, and Martha Cornwell (via Zoom). Also present was zoning administrator Shelly Stiles, and from the Bennington County Regional Commission, Janet Hurley, Samantha Page, and Callie Fishburn. Several members of the public also attended in person and via Zoom.

### 2. Approval of Minutes August 9, 2023

Mr. Foley moved to approve the minutes. Mr. Williams seconded the motion. Ms. Stiles was asked to spell out acronyms in future minutes. Mr. Williams asked that #5, paragraph 3 be revised to “the Residential Energy Building Standards program. It was pointed out that we have not been able to attain State energy minimum standards for new construction. Ms. Hurley will...” Mr. Foley moved to accept the amended minutes. Ms. Burns seconded the motion, which passed 5-0-0.

### 3. Public comments

Karen Mellinger asked about the status of the Planning Commission’s letter to the Select Board. Mr. Williams said the Commission did not support or oppose the project but instead made comments on it. She asked why Mr. Foley voted against approving the letter. He explained why he thought the PUC process was likely to be an arbitrary one in which he didn’t want to participate. Ms. Mellinger urged the Commission to work harder to get the word out to people, especially older people who might not use the internet. She urged the Commission to invite Annette Smith to make a presentation on creating an energy committee.

### 4. Presentation of draft Enhanced Energy Plan (EEP), BCRC staff

It was noted that the EEP would be incorporated as a chapter in the Town Plan.

Ms. Page presented a Powerpoint presentation, including the following points:

Energy planning in Vermont is governed by the Vermont Energy Plan, Act 174, and the “90 x 50” (90% renewables by 2050) goal. The goal would be secured by a general decrease in energy use through greater efficiency and weatherization, and the development of renewable energy. The EEP would allow the Town to achieve “substantial deference” before the PUC.

The energy data outputs graphed in the EEP were created by a State-provided model and are projections only.

Renewable energy goals follow from the 2017 Regional Energy Plan, and call for Shaftsbury to produce 10.5 MW of solar power, of which about 6200 MWh could be produced from rooftop solar. To produce the entire 10.5 MW would require that 700 houses have rooftop solar, about one-half the number of structures in the Town. Limited wind energy development of about 2.3 MW, perhaps by encouraging small scale installations with appropriate wind potential, should also be considered.

Among the recommendations in the EEP:

- Create a town energy committee
- Create a webpage devoted to energy efficiency
- Consider adopting screening standards, preferred sites, and other conditions
- Promote electric vehicle charging at Cole Hall, and bike use

Ms. Page noted that the results of the survey completed by ninety-nine residents would be incorporated in the EEP.

The discussion of the presentation raised the following points for those in attendance, among others:

- The plan should be specific, with actions.
- We shouldn't achieve the 10.5 MW goal at the expense of the environment.
- Why not use existing gravel pits? Ms. Cornwell reported that W E Dailey looked into placing solar on its gravel pits and found it economically unfeasible as they were located too far from phase 3 power lines.
- The EEP as presented doesn't protect the town.
- From the authors and PC members: We couldn't be more specific because the survey results were ambiguous; the only item agreed upon was the creation of an energy committee.
- An energy committee would have to come up to speed awfully fast to be able to educate Shaftsbury citizens. Ms. Fishburn said BCRC staff would be glad to assist in that effort.
- BCRC staff noted that the EEP, as required by State policy, is about a lot more than renewable energy.
- Rooftop solar could make a dent but our goals for 2050 require a radical redesign of our lives – or we won't get to 2050!
- Scale is important to Shaftsbury residents.
- The committee will need parameters, guidelines, goals, a mission statement, a timeframe. Ms. Miller said the PC has begun to imagine what the committee might look like. Ms. Fishburn said the committee's mission would be to consider screening, preferred sites, and local constraints, and to do education and public outreach.
- The Commission, not the committee, should be charged with making recommendations regarding preferred sites as it has the necessary experience for the task.

Ms. Hurley said the BCRC will present its final EEP draft in October. At that time the Town can adopt or revise it. Ms. Burns suggested any document be put to a vote of the citizens. Ms. Cornwell noted that we have already missed the deadline for the March 2024 election.

Ms. Hurley suggested a recommendation for a moratorium could be included in the EEP. Ms. Cornwell said she liked that idea as it buys time: it is very hard to get the word out to citizens. Ms. Mellinger suggested a handout. Ms. Fishburn noted that she has provided a lot of material on energy and efficiency and will leave it for distribution.

Ms. Miller said she and Ms. Cornwell (who constitute the PC's EEP subcommittee) will compile the results of the night's meeting and share them with Ms. Hurley.

## 5. Other business

### *Planning Grant*

Ms. Hurley urged the commission to consider applying for a second grant to improve the zoning bylaw. Ms. Miller said the PC had agreed that, with everything else going on with the PC, it is too much to take on in the year's duration of the grant.

### *Bylaw revision*

Ms. Cornwell moved to change the proposed revision of the bylaw to "Road frontage requirements in the R40 and R80 zones shall be reduced to 75', where the new lots so created are no more than one and a half the minimum size for that zoning district." Ms. Burns seconded the motion, which passed 5-0-0.

Ms. Cornwell moved to change the hearing date on the proposed bylaw revisions from September 13 to September 27. Mr. Foley seconded the motion, which passed 5-0-0.

*Moratorium*

The commissioners discussed including moratorium language in the EEP. Ms. Stiles was directed to ask town counsel whether the following language would be acceptable: "A moratorium is imposed on all solar development on sites of ten acres or more."

*Adjournment*

Ms. Burns moved to adjourn at 8:50 p.m. Mr. Foley seconded the motion, which passed 5-0-0.