

**TOWN OF CHESTER  
PLANNING COMMISSION**

**June 4, 2018 Minutes**

**Commission Members Present:** Naomi Johnson, Claudio Veliz, Cheryl Joy Lipton, Tim Roper.

**Staff Present:** Michael Normyle, Zoning Administrator, Cathy Hasbrouck, Recording Secretary.

**Citizens Present:** Jason Rasmussen

**Agenda Item 1, Review minutes from May 7 and 17, 2018 meetings**

Tim Roper moved to accept the minutes from the May 7<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> meetings. Claudio Veliz seconded the motion. Naomi Johnson had a correction to page 4. She wanted the sentence, “Naomi Johnson said that it was not appropriate for Commission members to have opinions about various options” changed to “Naomi Johnson said that it was not appropriate for Commission members to let personal opinions about various options influence the Energy chapter.” A vote was taken and the May 7, 2018 minutes were accepted as amended.

The minutes for May 17, 2018 were then taken up. Tim Roper asked to have the sentence “Naomi Johnson gave the example of putting a store where there was a store as a reason for a site plan review instead of a hearing before the DRB” on page 4 changed to “Naomi Johnson gave the example of putting a store where there had previously been a store as a reason for a site plan review instead of a hearing before the DRB.”

Michael Normyle asked to have this sentence on page 1 clarified, “The state requires that towns allow home occupations and home businesses as permitted uses in their bylaws.” It was agreed by the Commission members to change that sentence to, “The state requires that towns allow home occupations as permitted uses in their bylaws.” Michael was concerned that people will believe a home business use does not require a conditional use permit.

On page 3 Michael Normyle asked that the sentence, “Brandy said that site plan reviews could be handled by the Zoning Administrator” clarified to “Brandy said that minor site plan reviews could be handled by the Zoning Administrator”, since only minor site plan reviews could be handled without a hearing. In that same line of thought, Michael asked that the sentence on the next page, “Barre Pinske said he agreed with Michael Normyle that a site plan review by the Zoning Administrator was a good thing” be changed to specify *minor* site plan review as well.

On page 5 Michael asked that the sentence, “A traffic study would not be necessary to establish expected volume” be amended to say, “In her opinion, a traffic study would not be necessary to establish expected volume”, as Brandy Saxton was expressing an opinion, and current or future statutes could require a traffic study.

Tim Roper moved to accept the 5/17/18 minutes with those changes. Claudio Veliz seconded the motion. A vote was taken and the motion passed.

**Agenda Item 2, Citizen Comments**

There were no citizen comments.

### **Agenda Item 3 Discuss Energy Plan with Jason Rasmussen**

The Commission then took up a sample Energy Plan prepared by Jason Rasmussen which could become the new energy chapter for the Town Plan. Jason explained that the document is laid out in sections which correspond to the guidelines set up by the Department of Public Service for a certified Energy Plan. Having a certified Energy Plan will give the town some voice in the siting of renewable energy projects in the town. Jason hoped the Commission would use the document as a template, delete parts that don't apply to Chester and come up with things they'd like to add.

The first section taken up was 4.1, Conservation and Efficient Use of Energy. This section enumerates ways the Town of Chester as an entity can encourage conservation and energy efficiency. The section has a list of possible actions in section 4.1.1. Many members felt the section was too "fluffy", lacked concrete concepts and did not address how any of the initiatives would be paid for. Finally, Naomi Johnson said she thought the Commission should look at the document as a whole. Other sections of the document, and the Goals, Policies and Recommendations section of the Energy chapter would be more specific. She herself had read through the entire document and found much to agree with. There were only a few places where she wanted changes. She asked the other members of the Commission what portion of the document they agreed with. Claudio, Cheryl Joy and Tim all said they agreed with 90 – 95% of the document and wanted to use it as the basis for the Energy chapter. The Commission then agreed that items 4.1.1.a – 4.1.1.g were acceptable as written.

Section 4.1.2 dealt with promoting energy efficient buildings. Michael Normyle pointed out that Chester no longer issues Certificates of Occupancy. It has not done so for a very long time. It does issue a Certificate of Compliance, mainly looking at site plan issues such as setbacks and building height. Item 4.1.2.b.2, which talks about the Zoning Office issuing a Certificate of Occupancy, would have to be modified in some way for Chester. No one could definitively answer the questions that came up in the ensuing discussion. No one knew, for instance, whether the state of Vermont requires compliance with the state energy code, under what conditions it is required or what entities check on compliance. Michael Normyle suggested that the issue comes up when a property is refinanced or changes hands, and the builder or current owner is held responsible for any failures. It was decided to revisit this issue when more information has been obtained. Michael Normyle said he would look into this. He said he currently had a flyer about the issue that he hands out with building permits.

Items 4.1.2.c – 4.1.2.h were accepted by the Commission as written. Tim Roper asked to add net-zero ready buildings to the list of development features that would receive an incentive. Claudio Veliz asked for examples of landscaping for energy efficiency mentioned in 4.1.2.h. Jason, Tim and Cheryl Joy listed planting deciduous trees on the south side of a building, planting conifers on the north side, orienting a building for solar gain, and roof styles that allow for solar panels as examples of landscaping for energy efficiency. The Commission decided to add item 4.1.2.i, Promote building placement for passive and active solar where possible.

Tim Roper said he felt that the word promote should be changed to incentivize wherever it is possible and practical. Naomi asked if item 4.1.3.g, "Consider including anaerobic digestion with methane capture as part of a future wastewater treatment facility upgrade project", was not appropriate for a town as small as Chester. She had seen the St. Johnsbury's wastewater facility, which is quite a bit bigger than Chester's wastewater plant. The engineers told her an anaerobic

digester couldn't work at St. Johnsbury because the wastewater plant was too small. Cheryl Joy asked about the dairy cow operation on Green Mountain Turnpike. She wanted to know if it was large enough to support an anaerobic digester. Tim Roper said the technology was very expensive to install and maintain and there were only 2 or 3 in the whole state, despite incentives. Cathy Hasbrouck said she had seen lots of ads online for smaller scale anaerobic digesters and wondered if smaller, distributed systems should be encouraged. It was decided to keep 4.1.3.g but remove the wastewater reference.

Michael Normyle opened a discussion of wood and woodstoves. He had heard some experts say that the environmental impact of burning wood could be as bad as burning fossil fuels. Tim Roper said that wood is a "new" carbon, meaning burning it is more like replacing carbon dioxide that had been in the air recently than adding carbon dioxide that had been removed and captured in the earth's crust millions of years ago, which is what happens with fossil fuels. Tim said that newer wood stoves are not only more efficient at drawing out energy from wood, they also burn the particulates that cause pollution. Tim proposed specifying low particulate emission wood stoves in items 4.1.3.e and 4.1.4.g. Cheryl Joy said there are woodstove buy-back programs in place now. She heard of one in Vermont that would pay \$4,000 for an old wood stove toward replacing it with a low particulate emission stove.

In the Transportation section, (4.2) Jason Rasmussen said the sentence after 4.2.b should have been removed from the document. The discussion on this section ranged widely. Commission members agreed that technological changes in transportation, such as electric vehicles and autonomous vehicles are coming fast, and cultural changes will accompany them. Tim Roper pointed out that item 4.2.3.d, which addresses town use of biodiesel, should be moved to section 4.2.5. Claudio Veliz asked if a municipal charging station was a commercial venture. Tim Roper and Cheryl Joy Lipton said money could be collected for the charging service. The Commission also discussed ways to support the cultural change which is needed to shift from multiple vehicle trips per day for various errands to one vehicle trip or one walking trip. Jason Rasmussen said he would look into adding something about that to the document.

In section 4.2.4 Cheryl Joy suggested changing the name of the Trails Committee to Circulation Committee. In order to avoid being too specific, it was decided to drop the name entirely. Tim Roper suggested mentioning centrally located shared workspaces which could allow telecommuting for people who can't telecommute from their home. Claudio suggested that Commission members read the pamphlet Complete Streets Principles. Jason Rasmussen said he would add a hyperlink for that pamphlet to the document.

The discussion moved to Section 4.4, Statement of Policy on the Development of Siting of Renewable Energy Resources. This is where Chester would list its preferred sites for renewable energy development. Cheryl Joy Lipton said she would want to discuss habitat connectivity with the Vermont Fish and Wildlife staff before picking any sites. Naomi Johnson asked if the Commission had the option of not being specific about environmental resources that could not be impacted. Jason Rasmussen said the commission did have that option. Naomi Johnson said the document could be very specific about what features should not be impacted by an energy installation, such as vernal pools or deer yards, instead of trying to name specific areas of town that could not be developed.

Tim Roper asked if the statistics in Table 7 on Page 6 includes both the town well solar installation and the Trebo Road field. Jason Rasmussen said he thought that it did, but he agreed the numbers looked suspicious and he would check them.

The discussion was suspended here until the next meeting.

**Agenda Item 4 Set a date for the next meeting**

The next meeting of the Planning Commission will be Thursday June 21, 2018 at 7:00 PM, assuming that Jason Rasmussen can attend that night. The Commission decided to formally approve the Regional Energy Plan at that meeting as well. Claudio Veliz moved to adjourn the meeting. Tim Roper seconded the motion. A vote was taken and the motion passed.