

Mendon Planning Commission Minutes (Draft) **September 9, 2019**

Present: Justin Lindholm, Fred Bagley, Gary Sihler and Teri Corsones were present. The draft August 21, 2019 minutes were approved as written.

Enhanced Energy Plan: Barbara Noyes Pulling was present from the Rutland Regional Planning Commission, to continue the discussion she began at the July 1, 2019 Mendon Planning Commission meeting about Enhanced Energy Plans.

One of the suggestions made at the July 1 meeting was the possibility of locating a “preferred site” in a portion of the Rutland City Forest. Teri reported that she spoke with Jeff Wennberg, Commissioner of the Rutland City Department of Public Works, about the suggestion. Commissioner Wennberg indicated that he would be open to a discussion about that possibility. Barbara explained that Mendon would need to identify approximately 90 acres as a preferred site if Mendon were to adopt an Enhanced Energy Plan.

Barbara distributed copies of a 29-page Draft Mendon Enhanced Energy Plan she had prepared for review. The first sentence provides: “The purpose of the Mendon Enhanced Energy Plan is to conduct comprehensive energy planning at the local level while also achieving state energy goals – most importantly, the goal to have renewable energy sources meet 90% of the town’s energy needs by 2050.”

Members questioned the feasibility of the goal, in light of research that indicates it may not be realistic. Barbara explained that the draft is a starting point for the plan; members will review the draft and bring any suggested revisions to the next meeting. The adoption process for approving an Enhanced Energy Plan is similar to the process for approving a Town Plan. That is, the Mendon Planning Commission will need to hold at least one public hearing, and the Mendon Selectboard will need to do the same. The goal will be to complete the adoption process by the end of the year, if possible.

The advantage to Mendon having 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”.

One of the decisions that will need to be made is whether to include a “viewshed” analysis in the Enhanced Energy Plan. Barbara explained that such an analysis is not required, but it could be advantageous. She will research whether a Middlebury College class that has conducted such an analysis in other plans might be available to assist with a viewshed analysis if it’s decided to undertake one in Mendon.

Members cited different circumstances in Mendon that should be highlighted in an Enhanced Energy Plan, including Route 4 being a “scenic byway”, and including the Ridgeline Overlay District in Mendon. Barbara said each would be very relevant in an Enhanced Energy Plan.

Barbara also described a recent Vermont Supreme Court decision that discusses the importance of town plans. She recommended that members review the decision, and that they review the Bennington Town Plan in relation to the decision. Teri will obtain a copy of each and distribute them to MPC members before the next meeting.

Barbara will update the data in the draft plan. She will also delete any references to other towns that were inadvertently included in the draft. She will be in attendance at the October 7, MPC meeting at 5:30 p.m.

The next meeting of the Mendon Planning Commission is scheduled for Monday, October 7, 2019 at 5:15 p.m. at the Mendon Town Office.

Respectfully submitted,

Teri Corsones