

# Draft Minutes

## Special Meeting of the Middlesex Planning Commission

Public Hearings for:  
Middlesex Enhanced Energy Plan (First Public Hearing)  
Continuation of Permit #20-01 (Planetary Matters, Inc. – new commercial building)  
Continuation of Permit #20-19 (Planetary Matters, Inc. – proposed restaurant/pub)

Wednesday, July 1, 2020  
6:00 PM

Due to restrictions on public gatherings as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, these hearings were held remotely via the town's Zoom account and telephone.

All site visits were waived.

### Planning Commission Members Present

Sandy Levine

Elias Gardner

Theo Kennedy

Mitch Osiecki

(Dick Alderman – Absent)

### Guests:

Mike Pelchar (resident)

Dexter Lefavour (resident)

CTO at 6:03

Planning Commission members and guests were introduced.

## **First Hearing: First Public Hearing on the town's proposed Enhanced Energy Plan.**

Dexter Lefavour has reviewed the draft of the EEP and offered several comments:

As a general rule, doesn't like state programs that subsidize residential solar projects. He feels that these programs generally support wealthier residents and are paid for largely by the taxes of poorer residents.

Finds problems with some of the numbers provided by Efficiency Vermont with respect to renewable energy use by Middlesex residents.

Dexter is also uncomfortable with applying renewable energy targets broadly. It's fine if Vermont wants to set state-wide goals for renewable energy usage, but feels it's unreasonable to apply those goals uniformly across all communities. Some communities are better able to incorporate renewable energy projects, but often, such projects aren't easily implemented in smaller, rural communities.

Would like more clarity on the role of the town's Energy Committee.

Also wonders about the role of the Zoning Administrator as a point of contact for weatherization and energy-efficiency programs. Would like to see outreach not only to builders of new homes, but also to new home owners.

Commented further that below a certain income level, there are weatherization programs that are widely available, but not at all well-known. Feels there is an underserved market of market of people who could greatly benefit from weatherization but more effort needed to reach these folks.

Also doesn't think that most small towns have the available expertise, certainly not as volunteers, to provide meaningful review of proposed renewable energy projects (such as those the EEP would provide the town standing before the Public Utilities Commission). Feels the state has the resources to provide the most meaningful oversight.

Sandy thanked Dexter for his willingness to review the EEP and share his thoughts.

Brief discussion followed regarding the timeline for adoption of the EEP. The goal remains to have it on the ballot at the November elections.

Theo reported that Zach Maia has indicated his intention to update some of the numbers and technical data in the current draft.

Discussion of Dexter's comments regarding targets and goals in the EEP.

Elias commented that there is still some value in setting targets, even if we feel like they may not apply equally across all of Vermont.

Mitch said he can see both sides of the argument as to whether targets are realistic. Even if targets are a stretch, they can have value. Unlikely the town will make improvements if we don't set goals. Theo stated that he also likes the idea of goals, even if they may not be uniformly achievable by all.

Sandy also OK with goals.

General agreement that town may not have a lot of technical expertise in this area, but we've probably acknowledged as much in the EEP. But the EEP provides the means for the town to comment on renewable energy projects, should we ever wish to weigh in.

Theo will update our draft EEP ahead of the next meeting on July 8.

With no further comments offered, the hearing on the Enhanced Plan was closed at 6:30.

### **Other Business**

Sandy provided an update on the Municipal Planning Grant Project – walkable village design.

Dayton Crites of D& K met with representatives of Green Mountain Power last week to review property around the dam on the Winooski River. As it happens, GMP is currently undergoing a process called 401 Certification with the State. A portion of the review process includes the category of "public good."

In short, GMP has an incentive to work with communities to provide some public benefit from infrastructure they have in towns. Potentially good timing, as GMP may be willing to look for ways to provide some support for our MPG project.

There is a 401 Certification hearing scheduled for Tuesday, July 7. Sandy plans to attend the hearing and will provide an update at our meeting the day after.

Discussion that it would be beneficial to develop a list of village residents, so we can encourage their participation in a couple of upcoming meetings (July 8<sup>th</sup> and July 29<sup>th</sup>). Mitch offered to work on this. May be a tall order to do much outreach ahead of the July 8 meeting, but hopefully we can attract some interest for our meeting on July 29.

Susan Clark may also be able to help with outreach to village residents.

**Continuation of Hearing on Permit #20-01 convened at 6:52 pm.**

In addition to PC members Sandy Levine, Elias Gardner, Theo Kennedy and Mitch Osiecki, representatives of Planetary Matters Russ Bennett and Mike Pelchar confirmed on the call.

Russ Bennett stated that he walked the property line with neighbor Alison Cornwall, and discussed the general layout of the proposed structure. Russ reiterated that the existing vegetative buffer between the project site and Cornwall residence includes several trees taller than proposed structure, so unlikely that there will be any view of the building from the Cornwall property. Russ felt the discussion went well, but he was reluctant to speak for Alison Cornwall.

Mitch stated that he shared link to this hearing by email with Alison and Lisa Parrish. Confirmed that he got an email back from Alison stating that she had reviewed project with Russ and has no further questions or objections to the project. Also got a reply from Lisa Parrish stating that her interest in the project was only general and has no further concerns. Mitch also spoke to Dave Pembroke in person (no email) and he had no further question regarding this project.

Paul Stafford (rep of Planetary Matters) joined the call.

Discussion of the height of the proposed project. This is a matter that the ZBA will undertake in their Conditional Use Review. Mitch offered to share text of regulation 3.5 - Height Requirements with Russ and Paul. Outside the scope the Planning Commission's site plan review, but Mitch advised that the regulation does offer the ZBA some latitude in approving a project taller than 35 feet.

**Motion:** Theo moved to approve site plan for the project; Elias seconded. No further questions of discussion. Theo, Elias, Mitch and Sandy voted in the affirmative. **Motion passed 4-0-1.**

## **Continuation of Hearing on Permit #20-19 followed at 7:02 pm.**

Mitch received an updated sketch plan of the site today and shared with PC members via email. Not everyone had a chance to review, but Russ walked everyone through the highlights:

Plan now shows the two proposed curb cuts along US Route 2, with a raised berm along the roadway, instead of the current wide-open access to the property. The sketch also shows a much more defined and rounded off boundary along Gallagher Road.

Applicants intend to incorporate greenspace around the building.

The sketch plan now also shows presence of downcast lighting around building and at edges of the new berm, which will visually emphasize the two new curb cuts.

Theo asked if the underground tanks have already been removed. Russ confirms that they have. Has documentation if we're interested.

Sandy asks to further review some aspects of Section 5.5, specifically access, maintenance of public roads, circulation and on-site storage.

Theo commented that he hoped PMI could coordinate with D&K work on the MPG and share ideas about managing development of this area, specifically with respect to crosswalks.

Russ commented that property owners can't independently plan a crosswalk across a state highway, even if they happen own both parcels proposed to be connected by the crosswalk.

Theo observed that the PC chose Dubois & King as consulting partner on our MPG project in part due to their understanding of the permitting process and their experience working with the State to implement transportation projects. Theo hopes Planetary Matters is able to share their vision for the area with our D&K partners.

Russ responded that the current proposal is really a first-step toward a longer term vision of a two-lane highway, with parallel parking on both sides of the highway as a buffer for a bike lane/walking path.

Russ stated that he'd be interested in working to develop an interim walkway along the Camp Meade campus.

In response to a question, Russ replied that he believes (and Paul confirmed) that the highway right-of-way is 60 feet along this stretch of the roadway, which would be sufficient to support the long-term plans for parallel parking/bike lane/sidewalk, which would be a big transformation of the area. Reiterated that this is a long-term project, but that the opportunity exists now to begin some initial steps.

Question about storm water runoff.

Russ responded that, similar to the Camp Meade campus, site has lots of sandy soil. The proposed curbing will obviously affect where water runs along the highway. On the project site itself, storm water readily drains into the soils, so there will be no need for extensive storm water management.

Question about lighting.

Russ stated that as discussed last week, they propose minimal downcast lighting. They will add a couple of downcast lights at either edge of the proposed berm to help signal where the curb cuts are.

Question about landscaping and screening.

They propose to add a bit of screening around the site of the dumpster depicted on the sketch plan. Russ added that they will add additional landscaping to create visual interest. The site is currently a barren wasteland and they certainly plan to make the site look more attractive.

Added that the revised plan shows the addition of an exterior walk-in cooler, which they anticipate will be designed to look similar to a garden shed.

No further questions were posed.

**Motion:** Elias moved to approve; Mitch seconded.

Brief discussion followed. Theo asked about the project timeline. They have a project partner currently lining up financing. They hope to have facility ready to open by the fall of this year.

Theo, Elias, Mitch, Sandy voted in favor. **Motion carried 4-0-1.**

#### **Upcoming schedule:**

July 8: MPG project update.

July 15: Regular monthly meeting. Zoning: review priorities, including Clare's list of suggestions.

July 29: Public Presentation of Village Design grant project.

#### **Adjournment**

**Motion:** Theo moved to adjourn; Elias seconded. **Motion carried 4-0-1.**

Meeting adjourned at 7:34 pm.