

Draft Minutes

Public Hearing / Enhanced Energy Plan Amendment to 2019 Town Plan

Thursday, October 28, 2021

6:00 PM

Middlesex Town Clerk's Office

5 Church Street

Middlesex, VT 05602

This meeting was conducted remotely using the town's Zoom account. But with the lifting of the Governor's State of Emergency, the Middlesex Planning Commission also allowed for in-person attendance. PC member Sandy Levine attended from Town Hall, which was open for anyone who to attend the meeting in person.

Planning Commission Members Present

Sandy Levine

Elias Gardner

Philip Comen

Theo Kennedy

Hearing Attendees:

JJ Vandette (in person at Town Hall)

Dexter Lefavour (in person at Town Hall)

Lauri Scharf

Michael Levine

Call to Order

Chair Sandy Levine called the meeting to order at 6:15 pm.

Introduction:

Sandy introduced the Enhanced Energy Plan Amendment, its history and process going forward for adoption. The following comments were received:

Lauri Scharf: as head of the Middlesex Energy Committee described the Committee's review and involvement in developing and review of the plan. He described the proposed plan as a good way forward.

Dexter Lefavour: Dexter as a member of the Energy Committee provided lengthy comments and explained he had worked with Theo Kennedy on the draft and provided comments earlier. A summary of additional comments include:

- Changes limited to transportation, thermal & renewable

- No comments incorporated on energy efficiency
- Siting section uses generic data & analysis not valid & short sighted
- Template or example excludes impact of renewable siting in the rest of town
- Referred to 2015 article from the National Review that California energy policies hit poor people the hardest
- Lack of equity in how policies are implemented
- Energy Efficiency Charge is a regressive tax that harms people with low income
- Energy policies benefit the wealthy who can take advantage of tax breaks
- VT has high electric rates when efficiency charge included
- Increasing electricity costs hurts people with lower incomes
- Acknowledged a disclaimer was added to the plan. Suggested alternative language to change the disclaimer to state that all requirements are voluntary and will not drive any regulatory, building or land use regulations in Town. Suggested EEP should not drive decisions on town policy but only guide voluntary individual action.
- Questioned whether “deference” on siting is desirable as that could be costly for Town to participate in PUC proceedings
- Page 6 add additional generation especially biomass as an energy resource and encourage local production
- Page 7, Table 1 – numbers are not real or Middlesex specific
- Page 8, Electric numbers not specific to Middlesex with commercial & residential breakdown
- Table 3 heating – no natural gas in Middlesex; suggested adding a cost column and including cost per BTU for comparison
- Best management practices for energy are not sustainable; the subsidies increase poverty
- Table 5 – weatherization goals but no standard for what is weatherization
- Weatherization needs money in a budget and has not progressed in changing energy consumption. Without measure or resources it is inequitably distributed to those with access to political entities and not to people who want it. No inventory of weatherization needs.
- Targets could be mis-used to stop or promote development
- Plan is archaic in light of COVID and more people working at home; increasing home electrical use and reduced commuting
- Plan should promote work at home and increase broadband
- Plan includes actions already completed including energy committee and building guidance
- Make energy plan consistent with other strategies in Town Plan
- Page 28 – zoning changes should not implement Energy Plan

JJ Vandette:

- Good job on Energy Plan
- Supports including opportunities for future technologies
- Benchmarks & goals with specifics to measure them are good
- Supports calling out equity and how plan will address that
- Plan is nice to have in place for PUC to give deference to local preferences.
- Plan gives leg up in future PUC proceedings

Dexter asked about timing of changes & receiving additional comments. PC will take up at Nov 17 meeting and any additional comments or edits should be provided in advance of that.

Hearing closed.

Public members left and PC members stayed on the call to discuss schedule and process going forward.

Written comments received from CVRPC. Sandy will reach out to CVRPC and draft proposed changes to address their comments.

Theo will draft changes to address matters raised by Dexter that are within the scope of the EEP. Many comments provided by Dexter focus on state energy policy and not the EEP.

Guidance provided by Commission for drafting:

- Make EEP & Town Plan consistent re siting (CVRPC comment)
- EEP as part of Town Plan should guide regulatory action including zoning and not be limited to only voluntary measures, though emphasis on voluntary measures is good.
- Change details in tables that are in error.

New draft with edits should be circulated one week before Nov 17 hearing.

Adjournment.

Adjourned at 7:50 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Sandy Levine
Planning Commission Chair