

BARRE TOWN PLANNING COMMISSION MINUTES

The Town of Barre Planning Commission held their regular meeting on **Wednesday, December 21, 2016** beginning at **7:00** p.m. at the **Municipal Building**, Lower Websterville.

Members Present:

Cedric Sanborn Charlie Thygesen Sr. John Hameline
Debra Pierce Chris Violette George Clain

Members Absent:

Claire Duke

Others Present:

1) **CHANGES TO THE AGENDA**

None

2) **APPROVAL OF MINUTES:**

On a motion by Hameline, seconded by Clain, the commission unanimously voted to approve the **October 19, 2016** meeting minutes.

3) **WARNED PUBLIC HEARINGS**

4) **TOWN PLAN AMENDMENT(S):**

5) **FOLLOW UP:**

Discuss amending the Town Plan to move it towards being able to obtain a determination of compliance with regard to its use and being given substantial deference at section 248 hearings for renewable energy project that go before the Public Service Board, all in accordance with Act 174.

Discuss whether to seek Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission's custom technical assistance with the Town Plan related to the previous topic.

Cedric informed members that he and Chris had attended a training session last week hosted by the Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission (CVRPC or RPC). The training was to provide member towns with information regarding the new requirements of ACT 174 and obtaining substantial deference before the Public Service Board in renewable energy hearings. Towns can, if they so choose, work towards amending their plans on their own with some help from the RPC. The CVRPC will be picking three towns to significantly help them rewrite their plans to make them ACT 174 compliant. The CVRPC is calling this compressive enhanced energy planning.

If the Planning Commission wants to seek the enhanced energy planning from the RPC, they had to know we were interested by December 17, 2016. Chris advised the RPC that Barre Town is interested but needed Selectboard and Planning Commission approval. Chris advised that the Selectboard voted last night (December 20, 2016) to seek RPC's assistance.

Chris advised the Commission that there are two questions. One, does the Planning Commission want to amend the plan to meet the ACT 174 requirements. The second decision is if Barre Town is going to amend the plan, then do we want to seek the help CVRPC is offering.

Chris advised that some towns aren't going to do anything at all. Some are going to take a wait and see position.

George asked for some background on the CVRPC. Chris advised that the CVRPC is made up of 23 towns. All of Washington County and three Orange County Towns (Washington, Williamstown, and Orange). Each town appoints one representative to serve on the CVRPC board. CVRPC has numerous paid staff people. Some of their services are free, some we pay as we go.

George asked where the RPC becomes the experts on the enhanced energy planning. Chris advised that they have fulltime planners as well as mapping specialist. Whether they are experts in energy planning, probably not, but they have the people in place and access to much of the information that is necessary.

George stated that what he is trying to figure out is that if we don't do anything, what will happen? Chris advised that we don't have to do anything, it's just that projects that go before the Public Service Board will only be given due consideration. If we enhance our plan to include the ACT 174 requirements, we'd be given substantial deference. George stated that this only works if we adhere to their (the state) ideology. Everybody agreed that is true.

Chris says that his concern is that if we don't work towards amending our plan to include ACT 174 requirements while enhancing our Town Plan's energy section, we might be more likely to see renewable energy projects.

There was considerable discussion about the merits of amending the Town Plan to conform with ACT 174 requirements. There was a lot of concern about making our Town Plan so detailed with regard to energy planning.

MOTION:

On a motion by Clain, seconded by Hameline, the Town of Barre is requesting custom technical assistant in amending the Town Plan to include enhanced energy planning in accordance with ACT 174. Violette, Hameline, Thygesen, Pierce, Sanborn voted yes, Clain voted no. Motion passes.

Discussion:

Cedric asked each board member how they felt.

Charlie: If they are paying for it and it doesn't cost us anything than why wouldn't we want help.

Chris: Overall not happy with having to create such a detailed energy section but that he is afraid if we don't seek substantial deference before the Public Service Board, that we may become an easier target for renewable energy projects. If we are going to amend the plan to put us in line with ACT 174, then we might as well seek help from the CVRPC.

John: We should reluctantly move ahead with amending our plan and use the CVPRC to help write the plan. In the end wants to make sure that we have the final say on our Town Plan amendment.

Deb: Do we make it easier on ourselves now and take advantage of the help, or wait a year and then regret not having sought the assistance? Concerned that the reason they have given us this opportunity is to be able to draw a line between the towns that have and the towns that have not. That it might be easier for siting to occur if we are the have nots. Assuming we will but must have the final say on our plan.

George: Not saying that we shouldn't move forward with amending our plan but wants to do it on our own (paddle the boat with our own oar).

Cedric: Not a big fan of being forced to put a comprehensive energy plan into our Town Plan. Not really in favor but feeling we have no choice.

6) **OTHER:**

Chris advised the members that the Selectboard will be holding Town Plan amendment public hearings on January 3, 2017 and January 17, 2017. Chris asked if a few PC members could attend.

7) **CORRESPONDENCE:**

8) **ADJOURN:**

On a motion by Thygesen, seconded by Hameline, the Planning Commission voted unanimously to adjourn the meeting of December 21, 2016 at 8:38pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Christopher Violette

Cedric Sanborn, Chair

John Hameline

Chris Violette

Charlie Thygesen Sr.

Claire Duke

George Clain

Debra Pierce

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