

Natural Resources Committee

DRAFT Minutes

Jun 14, 2017

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| Committee Members: | Barrie Bailey, Nick Causton, Colin Davis, Peter Grant, Stan Grzyb, Wendy Sue Harper (Chair), Arabella Holzpfel, Ed Payne, Ron Payne, Paul Wagner, Kent Wright |
| Present: | Barrie Bailey, Wendy Sue Harper, Arabella Holzpfel, Ed Payne, Ron Payne, Kent Wright |
| Staff: | Kevin Behm |

Wendy Sue opened the meeting at 6:00. The Feb 8th minutes were moved for approval. (Ed motion, Kent 2nd). All were in favor.

Energy planning –

Kevin provided final copies of the regional energy maps for approval by the Committee. These maps had been provided at the last meeting, but the Committee had not voted on providing them to the Energy Committee for use in the regional energy section. Ed felt that the energy planning process should have been designed to start at the municipal level and then move to the regional level rather than developing regional energy policies before town energy planning. This could easily create a conflict between regional and local plans if local plans include additional limitations on energy siting that are not identified in a PSD approved regional plan. The Committee generally felt that using the basic set of maps as prescribed by the (PSD) Public Service Department would help guarantee approval of the regional energy section. Barrie motioned to accept the regional energy planning maps as developed and to forward them to the energy committee. Wendy Sue seconded. All in favor except Kent, who opposed the motion. The motion passes.

Wendy Sue noted that similar energy siting maps had been prepared for each of the municipalities in the region. Kevin noted that they are available at the web location here – <http://54.172.27.91/public/energysiting> Kevin clarified that the municipal maps are similar to the regional energy maps and follow the prescribed PSD methodology, however they do not include any local constraints or locally preferred energy siting locations. Wendy Sue stated that the Monkton Town Plan and Bylaws specify a ridgeline district that does not allow development that will probably be included as an energy siting constraint. Ron clarified that the energy siting process was directed towards larger field sized solar arrays or commercial turbines and would likely not affect individual homeowners looking to install solar panels on their home or property. Ed asked if any town's energy plan had been approved by the PSD and if all the town policies had been followed in a permit decision. Kevin stated that New Haven had submitted their town plan with an updated energy section, but the PSD noted that the process New Haven had used in their energy planning did not fully adopt the methodology prescribed for approval. A PSD decision on the plan has not been rendered yet. Kevin was not aware if any other municipal energy plan had been submitted to the PSD.

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Water Quality planning –

Kevin noted that staff was continuing to work with municipalities on adding flood resiliency language to town plans when they are under revision and that he and the transportation planner were setting-up the Fulcrum apps for those towns (7) awarded Better Roads Grants for undertaking hydrologically-connected road segment inventories. He also noted that he is also assisting a consultant with 3 additional Rutland County towns.

The revised Otter Creek Basin Plan (2018) will contain/ link to a detailed project list that ANR will use for project tracking and documenting nutrient reductions into water sources. The State will evaluate and score the projects to prioritize them with the intent to obtain the highest nutrient reductions for the available funds. The RPC (and NRC) will also evaluate the projects under regional and local criteria. The regional and local criteria have been under development by a group of RPCs and Kevin provided the recent draft for review.

Ed noted that the NRC would also enlist the help of the County Road Foremen for transportation projects since their expertise would be needed. Barrie felt that the scoring and weighting seemed unnecessarily complex and should be simplified. Also, she believed a natural resource criteria should be added to support projects that offered habitat or wildlife co-benefits.

Members were concerned that many of the plans identified in the criteria have a 5-8 year life and not all plans would be amended to include additional projects, so points could be lost. In addition, natural events may create an immediate need for a project not listed.

NRC members who were also Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC) saw the similarity with prioritizing transportation projects, but acknowledged that there could be many more water quality projects that needed to be scored and ranked and they were unsure as to how the RPC scoring would be incorporated into the State system. Kevin noted that this project prioritization process is still a work in progress and he would provide more information in a future meeting.

The Committee adjourned at 6:55