

**VILLAGE OF ESSEX JUNCTION  
PLANNING COMMISSION  
OCTOBER 6, 2016  
AGENDA  
6:00 P.M.**

**I. Audience for Visitors**

**II. Additions or Amendments to Agenda**

**III. Minutes**

- A. Special Meeting – July 25, 2016
- B. Regular Meeting – August 18, 2016

**IV. Review and Sign Ethics Policy**

- A. Elect Chairperson and Vice-chairperson

**V. Presentation by CCRPC**

- A. Presentation on ACT 174 and beginning of the Regional Energy Plan process

**VI. Other Planning Commissions Items**

- A. Discussion for a policy establishing a time limit for comments during the public forum portion of a meeting.

**VII. Adjournment**

Pursuant to 24 VSA Section 4464(a)(1)(C) Participation during the public hearing before the Essex Junction Planning Commission is a prerequisite to the right to take any subsequent appeal.

Members of the public are encouraged to speak during the Public-To-Be-Held agenda item, during a Public Hearing, or, when recognized by the Chair, during consideration of a specific agenda item.

NOTE: The Planning Commission may choose to postpone consideration of any application not started before 10:00 P.M.

This meeting will be held in the conference room of the Essex Junction municipal building at 2 Lincoln St., Essex Jct., VT. Reasonable accommodations will be provided upon request to the Village, 878-6950, to assure that Village meetings are accessible to all individuals regardless of disability.

For information on subsequent meetings on the above mentioned applications, please contact the Community Development Department from 8 – 4:30 at 878-6950 or the website [www.essexjunction.org](http://www.essexjunction.org).

**VILLAGE OF ESSEX JUNCTION  
PLANNING COMMISSION  
MINUTES OF MEETING  
October 6, 2016**

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** David Nistico (Chairman); John Alden, Amber Thibeault, Andrew Boutin, Joe Weith, Steven Shaw. (Diane Clemens was absent.)

**ADMINISTRATION:** Robin Pierce, Development Director.

**OTHERS PRESENT:** Melanie Needle, Emily Nosse-Leirer.

- AGENDA:**
1. Call to Order
  2. Audience for Visitors
  3. Additions/Amendments to the Agenda
  4. Minutes
  5. Election of Officers and Sign Ethics Policy
  6. Presentation: Regional Energy Plan Process
  7. Other Planning Commission Items
    - Policy for Time Limit on Public Comments
  8. Adjournment

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**1. CALL TO ORDER**

Chairman David Nistico called the meeting to order at 6 PM.

**2. AUDIENCE FOR VISITORS**

None.

**3. ADDITIONS/AMENDMENTS TO THE AGENDA**

None.

**4. MINUTES**

*July 25, 2016*

**MOTION** by John Alden, **SECOND** by Andrew Boutin, to approve the minutes of 7/25/16 with the addition of a reference that the joint meeting on July 25, 2016 was with the Board of Trustees. **VOTING: unanimous (6-0); motion carried.**

*August 18, 2016*

**MOTION** by Andrew Boutin, **SECOND** by Amber Thibeault, to approve the minutes of August 18, 2016 with the following correction(s)/clarification(s):

Page 2, paragraph beginning “Robin Pierce commented the long term lease...”, sentence reading “Mr. Pierce suggested the applicant use the urban tree nursery program...” – insert “for the balance of the required landscape budget” after “in lieu of plantings”;

Page 2, Public Comment, 1<sup>st</sup> sentence – correct the spelling of “March”.

**VOTING: unanimous (6-0); motion carried.**

**5. ELECTION OF OFFICERS and SIGN ETHICS POLICY**

*Chair*

**MOTION by John Alden, SECOND by Amber Thibeault, to nominate David Nistico as Chair of the Essex Junction Planning Commission.** There were no other nominations. **VOTING: unanimous; motion carried.**

David Nistico is Chair of the Essex Junction Planning Commission.

*Vice Chair*

**MOTION by Andrew Boutin, SECOND by David Nistico, to nominate John Alden as Vice Chair of the Essex Junction Planning Commission.** There were no other nominations. **VOTING: unanimous; motion carried.**

John Alden is Vice Chair of the Essex Junction Planning Commission.

*Sign Ethics Policy*

The planning commissioners reviewed and signed the Ethics Policy.

**6. PRESENTATION: Regional Energy Plan Process**

Melanie Needle and Emily Nosse-Leirer with Regional Planning reviewed the process to develop a regional energy plan to meet state energy goals and gain a Determination of Energy Compliance from the Public Service Department which will allow substantial deference with applications before the Public Service Board (per Act 174). The regional energy plan will show through policies and maps where renewable energy facilities can be located in the region. Local plans and towns can do their own energy plans and seek their own determination. The Department of Public Service is developing standards to be available 11/1/16. The regional energy plan must be updated every five years. Energy goals of the state include weatherizing 80,000 houses by 2025 (60,000 by 2017), having 90% of the state's energy from renewables by 2050 including transportation (25% by 2025 including 10% transportation energy and 40% by 2035), and decreasing total energy consumption by one third (15% decrease by 2025). Partners with Regional Planning include the Department of Public Service, electric utilities, Vermont Energy Investment Corp., and Vermont Energy Action Network.

Melanie Needle reviewed the timeline for adoption of the regional energy plan by Regional Planning. The plan establishes targets for energy use, strategies to get there (weatherization, carpooling, cluster development, retrofits, solar panels on rooftops, and such), targets in the region for renewable energy use, and energy resources for energy generation and where the facilities can be located. The plan will address how to decrease energy consumption, energy fuel mix, and energy siting. Essex Junction has significant area for solar and few areas for wind. There are Level 1 and Level 2 constraints to the energy development areas.

John Alden commented the push is to decrease fossil fuel use and use more electricity, but there is not a proposal to increase use of wood fuel.

Joe Weith observed people are concerned about the location of energy facilities so once the maps are published people will be interested.

Andrew Brown asked if someone must accommodate for an energy facility while building in an area identified for energy facilities. Ms. Needle said if the builder is proposing to build a solar facility and the map indicates the area is acceptable for that facility then it is likely the facility will be approved by the state.

Robin Pierce stated conserved land should be considered Level 1 constraint because the town and state have spent money conserving these important pieces of land and once solar and wind are built the land is changed forever. Ms. Needle said adding a Level 1 constraint will preclude landowners who want to do onsite generation. Robin Pierce said any land that is conserved that has in the conservation agreement the ability to generate onsite energy should be considered Level 2 otherwise the constraint should be Level 1, and if the land is in Level 2 then the requirement should state that renewable energy generation is for use onsite and not connected to the grid. Ms. Needle assured the goal is to have the maps reflect local land use policies. David Nistico added the concern is not just local constraints, but irreversible damage to soils.

John Alden asked if there will be a local overlay on the energy plan. Melanie Needle said that process has not yet been done. Comments on the regional energy plan are needed by November 1<sup>st</sup> so the comments can be applied to the maps before the deadline in December. The plan should reflect local land use policies in effect. A list of language and maps that are being referenced in the local plan can be noted.

John Alden asked if Maple Street Park or Indian Brook fall into qualifying areas. Melanie Needle said if the town is looking at Maple Street Park for a wind facility for example and the park is on the map then the municipality can decide whether to locate the facility there and go through the 248 proceeding.

John Alden asked how the goal of 90% by 2050 is to happen, adding an approach that will make meeting the goals realistic needs to be determined. People are less likely to take out loans to meet the goals. Robin Pierce stated more effort needs to be on education about how to use less energy. It could be as simple as wearing sweaters and lowering the thermostat. Joe Weith stated people will get interested once the allowed locations for facilities are known. Melanie Needle said a fuel switch from fossil fuels to electric is more energy efficient; it is more energy efficient to heat with electricity. The focus is solar and wind, but consideration will be given to whether existing hydro and biomass facilities have more potential output.

Steven Shaw asked about limiting the export of energy out of state. Melanie Needle said this is not part of the energy code. Emily Nosse-Leirer added federal law says export of a product including energy credits cannot be prohibited.

John Alden stated Chittenden County has the highest energy use in the state. Mr. Alden wondered if the plan will require the county to produce 90% of its own energy use or be

able to “purchase” from other counties. Melanie Needle said the analysis will show whether the county can produce all of its own energy (i.e. if the maps show enough area in the county for facilities to reach the goal).

Andrew Boutin asked if capped landfills and other developed/disturbed areas can be used for the solar and wind facilities rather than fields that would be used to grow crops. Melanie Needle said landfills, rooftops, gravel pits, brown fields, and such can be used. Emily Nosse-Leirer added the new net metering rules make the process easier for projects in previously used sites. Andrew Boutin noted the efficiency of solar panels is improving. Melanie Needle said the plan does not get into the detail of how many panels are needed to reach the energy goals. Emily Nosse-Leirer reiterated the plan is updated every five years and there will be a recalculation of efficiencies.

There was discussion of the importance of doing the education piece first to allow the opportunity to maintain houses at net zero and decrease the need to build more renewable energy facilities and impact the land. Designers and engineers should work together on developments at the start to develop a better result. The cost factor of reaching the goals must be considered. The Planning Commission will have a work session on 10/20/16 to discuss ideas and comments on the regional energy plan.

## 7. OTHER PLANNING COMMISSION ITEMS

### *Policy on Time Limit on Public Comments*

There was discussion of limiting the time each person has to comment at meetings to three minutes and giving the Chair discretion to change the amount of time if necessary. The policy should be added to the published agenda and mentioned in the opening remarks at each meeting.

**MOTION by Amber Thibeault, SECOND by John Alden, to approve a three minute rule on public comments that can be waived at the discretion of the Planning Commission and to print the rule on each published agenda. VOTING: unanimous (6-0); motion carried.**

## 8. ADJOURNMENT

**MOTION by Amber Thibeault, SECOND by John Alden, to adjourn the meeting. VOTING: unanimous (6-0); motion carried.**

The meeting was adjourned at 7:40 PM.

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