

**CITY OF VERGENNES
PLANNING COMMISSION
MINUTES
REGULAR MEETING
MONDAY, MAY 23, 2016**

Members Present: Shannon Haggett-Chair, Mike Winslow-Vice Chair, Jason Farrell, Cheryl Brinkman, Tim Cook, Morgan Kittredge

Members Absent: John Coburn

Also Present: Mel Hawley, Zoning Administrator; Greg White, Green Mountain Power

Shannon called the regular meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. He asked if there were any amendments to the agenda. No amendments to the agenda were brought forth.

Shannon then introduced Greg White from Green Mountain Power. Mr. White had attended the February meeting and returned to share a map of grid-connected power generation in Vergennes. The map identified active and proposed solar and wind generators within the city, along with three-phase distribution lines. The Planning Commission intends to use the map as a starting point to develop a map to identify prime solar generation areas which could become the Green Energy Overlay District. Mr. White said his team could add more details to the map such as topography and wetland areas. Shannon stated the Planning Commission would determine what additional details are desired to be reflected and would email Mr. White so an updated map could be produced. Mr. White agreed and advised he was retiring shortly and our new contact at Green Mountain Power is Josh Castonguay who will attend a future meeting and provide an updated map.

The map that Mr. White presented also indicates that the Vergennes substation is near capacity with existing and proposed solar generation. Mike asked if an upgrade was planned, and if nothing was planned in the next several years, did Mr. White think the Planning Commission was wasting time and energy in trying to identify prime generation locations and guide solar development in those areas? Mr. White responded there were no immediate plans to upgrade the Vergennes substation, but there was also a possibility that energy loads could be unloaded or allocated to other substations which could increase capacity in Vergennes. He added that he thought it was a good idea for Vergennes to continue and complete this planning process as it would be useful.

The minutes to the regular meeting of April 25, 2016 were reviewed. Cheryl moved to approve the minutes as written. The motion was seconded by Mike with all voting in favor.

The Planning Commission next began to discuss items that should be considered as updates to the Municipal Development Plan.

- 1) Solar siting: Cheryl presented the revised entry and proposed policies as discussed at last month's meeting. Everyone accepted the entry as written. Shannon added that John had submitted a draft community survey for the group to review, but suggested they wait until John was present to review it. Everyone agreed.
- 2) Green Energy Overlay District: Shannon said that based on Mel's suggestion, he looked at the Bennington Regional Planning Commission's energy plan. The plan includes a solar map identifying prime solar generation areas and listed Level 1 and Level 2 constraints. Level 1 constraints are defined as conditions which would likely make solar development unfeasible and Level 2 constraints are defined as conditions which could impact solar development, but which would not necessarily prevent it. The Planning Commission reviewed the list of constraints to identify which ones are present and applicable in Vergennes. Shannon will ask Green Mountain Power to add those constraints to the map. Shannon also presented draft language and policies for the proposed overlay district. The group determined it would be premature to assess the draft language until we have a more complete map as that will identify the lands included in the district.

The Planning Commission discussed the status of a city sidewalk survey and inventory. Mike shared the Google Map he had created for the project. The map identifies the location of all current sidewalks, but he hadn't had an opportunity to include current status information. Shannon asked if Mike had received any assessment data from John who had volunteered to rate many of the areas where the earlier assessments needed clarification. Mike responded he had not received John's assessments. Mike also asked about the best way to indicate trouble areas in an otherwise highly-rated section of sidewalk. The group settled on pinpointing by address any "hot-spot" areas, which would be areas of less than ten lineal feet whose condition was inconsistent with the surrounding sidewalk. Mike said he would start updating the map and added that he would open the access to the map so others could also update it.

Transportation items update – Shannon mentioned that the Strong Communities, Better Connections Grant Project Steering Committee had met the previous week and a final public event was being planned for June. He also stated the 2016 VTrans Bicycle and Pedestrian Program grant application deadline was coming up in July. Mel pointed out that one of the items from the February public meeting for the SCBC project – the rail trail – has never had a professional scoping which would be a useful report.

Education items update – No update.

Stormwater items update – No update

Tree/Urban Forestry items update – No update.

Materials Management items update – No update.

Under new business, Cheryl asked about including in the plan language surrounding public charging stations for electric cars. Mel responded that the Vergennes Partnership is taking the lead on charging stations and this should be included in their entry to the plan. He added that he

would remind Amy Bodette-Barr and Renny Perry at the Vergennes Partnership about this item.

Mel also informed everyone that municipal development plans adopted after July 1, 2015 will have an eight-year life instead of a five-year life with the passage of H.367. The current plan for Vergennes is not affected and will expire in 1919, but the next plan will be in effect for eight years.

The meeting adjourned at 8:57 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Mel Hawley, Clerk