

**NVDA Hearing for Substantial Deference: Barnet**  
**Held immediately following the hearing for regional approval of the Barnet Town Plan**  
**Wednesday, March 13, 2024 at 7:05 P.M.**  
**Barnet Fire Station, 151 Bimson Drive, Barnet**

From NVDA Board: Justin Barton-Caplin, Barton; Paul Brouha, Sutton; Mike Metcalf, Greensboro  
NVDA Staff: Alison Low

Representing Barnet: Eric Skovsted and Sue Sinclair, Barnet Planning Commission; Shirley Warden, Zoning Administrator; Gregory Jackmah, Barnet resident

*Note: The hearing was held in accordance with 24 V.S.A. §4352. If the regional plan has received an affirmative determination of energy compliance for the regional plan, the municipal legislative body may submit its adopted municipal plan to the regional planning commission for a determination of energy compliance. The regional planning commission shall issue an affirmative determination, signed by the chair of the regional planning commission, on finding that the municipal plan meets the requirements and is consistent with the regional plan. This process ALSO includes a public hearing, warned at least 15 days out, with an electronic copy of the notice sent to the requesting community. No further board action is required in this hearing, but staff cannot confer substantial deference until the plan is formally approved by the board, which is scheduled for March 21<sup>st</sup>, having just received a unanimous vote to recommend approval from the Town Plan Approval Committee.*

The hearing opened at 7:05 p.m. Alison Low explained the purpose of the hearing. She also explained that the planning commission had commenced the draft of this “enhanced” energy plan in accordance with Act 174 in early 2020, when NVDA’s original energy use estimates and LEAP projections were still being used. The LEAP projections have recently been updated to demonstrate the scope and scale of weatherization, fuel switching, and energy generation that is required to meet statewide energy plan goals. Subsequent updates to the Barnet plan will use the updated estimates.

The plan was reviewed by NVDA staff energy planner Allison Webster, who reviewed the Act 174 compliance checklist and found the plan to be compliant.

It was noted by attendees that Barnet has a significant amount of energy generation in place. In addition the hydroelectric facilities, there are some very large solar installations. There was a question about local generation benefit in the plan. This was a standard that gives preference to community solar projects (similar to the development in Peacham). Shirley Warden pointed out that Gilmour Farm has sheep under its solar collectors (demonstrating integration of farming with solar development.) Gregory Jackmah stated that he felt that Vermont Land Trust was “anti-solar,” since conservation easements do not allow solar. It was recommended that he reach out to Vermont Land Trust since his land was conserved through an easement in the 1980s, when solar development was not on the horizon. NVDA’s regional plan strongly recommends the integration of solar into agriculture operations.

The hearing closed at 7:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,  
Alison Low

