

**NVDA Town Plan Review Committee Hearing Minutes
Regional Approval of Charleston and Westfield Town Plans
Tuesday, February 5, 2019 6:00 PM
at the NVDA Conference Room, 79 Coventry St., Newport**

From Town Plan Review Committee: Mike Metcalf, Greensboro; Jeanne Desrochers, Coventry; Justin Barton-Caplin, Barton.

NVDA Staff: Irene Nagle

Representing Town of Charleston: John Kellogg, Charleston Planning Commission chair

Representing Town of Westfield: Pat Sagui, Westfield Planning Commission Chair

Others present: Carmen Murray, resident of Charleston; Mark Whitworth, NVDA energy Committee.

Prior to the opening of the Regional Approval hearing, the committee voted to have Mike Metcalf act as Chair. The hearing opened at 6:00 p.m.

Irene Nagle explained the purpose of regional approval of local plans as per 24 V.S.A. §4350, and the benefits it affords Towns.

The Charlestown Plan was considered first: Irene noted that the Plan contained all the required elements and was consistent with the State planning goals. She shared the comments in the Town Consultation report, which included recommendations for technical corrections and suggestions for how the Planning Commission could be involved in any application for Large Farm operations in town. John Kellogg explained the Town Plan process. He said that Act 174 drove the Town's major update of the energy section – the Town wants heightened standing in the review of energy projects. He noted that when the Planning Commission worked on the original Town Plan, it was difficult to get public involvement, but this time around more residents were engaged and interested in contributing to the Plan. He noted that Charleston's people, and the Town's natural and scenic resources are the Town's most valuable assets. Preservation of natural and scenic resources is a prime goal. The Town Plan Committee members noted that the Plan was very clear in stating the Towns expectations and priorities. Questions included whether the Town had difficulty maintaining a volunteer fire department. John note that it was a deep-seated tradition of the Town, and the age range of volunteers was broad.

Charleston resident, Carmen Murray, noted a typographical error on page 3 of the Plan – the word “nature” should be “natural.”

The Town Plan Review Committee adjourned the regional approval hearing so that the energy compliance hearing for Charleston could be opened. Irene discussed the purpose of the enhanced energy standards and the process for certification of local energy plans. Because the updated Energy Chapter of NVDA's Regional Plan has received certification by the Department of Public Service, the NVDA is authorized to review municipal plans in the region for energy compliance. The NVDA uses the Energy Planning Standards checklist developed by the Department of Public Service in reviewing municipal plans for energy compliance. Irene noted

that based on the checklist, the Town of Charleston's Plan was found to meet the enhanced energy planning standards.

Public comment was provided by Mark Whitworth. Mark pointed out inconsistency in the description of the turbine height in the different categories of wind facilities described on page 21-22. It was determined that this could be remedied by removing the word "hub," since the text indicated that the height was intended to include the blade tip at its highest point. Mark also pointed out that page 38 notes the acreage needed for the development of a solar facility of 1MW capacity, but notes that it did indicate the output, which is measured in MWh. Irene noted that table 12 on page 39 indicated total MWh output for ground-mounted solar. Mark also questioned whether the Town's proposed local constraint prohibiting development in areas higher than 1700 feet would constitute a "custom" map rather than the regionally- developed energy maps, as referenced in question 10 on the Energy Planning Standards checklist. Irene indicated that the Town was using maps provided by the region, including areas for prime solar and wind after areas with State-defined and regionally-defined constraints were removed. The proposed local constraint was indicated in narrative form on page 38. She did not consider that the Town's addition of a local constraint meant that they were not using the maps provided by the region, so skipped questions 11, 12 and 13 when completing the Standards checklist. It was noted that the addition of contours to the energy maps would be helpful in depicting the areas higher than 1700 feet. Irene noted that table 12 on page 39 indicated that the Town's net generation target could be met through rooftop solar alone, and that the conservative methodology used to estimate potential generation for ground-mounted solar indicated an output that far exceeded the Town's target. Irene also noted that the addition of the local constraints did not prohibit the use of a variety of renewable energy generation technology. Irene indicated that she would consult with other NVDA staff to assure that they were taking a consistent approach to the energy planning standards checklist. Irene noted that the addition of contour lines to the energy maps would be considered a technical correction to the plan.

The Energy Compliance hearing was adjourned and the Regional Approval hearing was re-opened so that the Town of Westfield's Plan could be reviewed.

Pat Sagui, Chair of the Westfield Planning Commission, described the Town's approach to the Plan update. She noted that the Town was concerned with the fate of the Westfield Community Care Facility which had recently closed. It was felt that Village Center designation might help attract redevelopment of the facility. The Town Plan Committee members asked about the Town's concern with helipads. Pat indicated that this type of development would be most likely in the northwestern part of Town which is adjacent to Jay. The Town would like to develop a bylaw related to helipads. It was also pointed out that there was a typo in Table 7.1 on page 32. Irene will get the correct number so that the Town can make this correction. Town Plan committee members appreciated the use of the property owner survey in developing the Plan update, and the information on carbon sequestration on page 60 of the Plan. It was also noted that the MVAS was a great benefit for residents that are without insurance coverage.

With the regional approval hearing concluded, Mike recommended regional approval of the Westfield Town Plan, and all Town Plan Committee members were in favor of the motion. Mike also moved to recommend the Charleston Plan for regional approval; the motion was seconded, all were in favor and the motion was passed.

The Energy Compliance hearing was reopened and Westfield's Plan was considered. Irene noted that based on the checklist, the Town of Westfield's Plan was found to meet the enhanced energy planning standards. She noted that the Town included additional local constraints, included areas of scenic views, that were depicted on the energy maps. Public comment was provided by Mark Whitworth. Mark questioned whether the reference to "high elevation" lands on page 52 referred to areas of 2000 feet or higher that has been identified as a regional constraint. Pat felt that it did but suggested conforming with NVDA staff planner Alison Low who had assisted the Town in the writing of the energy section. The question of whether the addition of local constraints meant maps other than those provided by the region were being used again was raised. Irene will confer with NVDA staff on this question.

It was noted that the next full board meeting of NVDA will be in mid-March. Although a determination of Energy Compliance does not need a vote of the NVDA Energy Committee or the full NVDA board, the plans proposed for energy certification do need to be regionally-approved. Therefore, the certification of energy compliance for both Charleston and Westfield cannot be issued until the full NVDA board has voted to approve each plan.

The Energy Compliance Hearing was closed at about 7:45 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Irene Nagle