

NRPC Energy and Climate Committee January 18th, 2023

Meeting Minutes

Board Members: A. Voegele, P. Zamore, K. Waite, M. LeFleur, B. Morris, D. Seeley, B. Buermann D. Smith
Staff: M. Valenta, C. Dimitruk, B. Caffrey

Agenda

1. Adjustments to the agenda
2. Review draft energy chapter
3. Overview of RPC funding request for Energy and Climate Planner
4. Adjourn

Adjustments to the Agenda: No adjustments to the agenda.

Reviewing the draft of energy chapter

M. Valenta presents the updated changes to the energy chapter.

P. Zamore asks for clarification between the “Energy Plan” and “Energy Chapter”. P. Zamore asks if the authors of the Climate Energy plan will be listed for future reference. No major immediate comments on the goals.

A. Voegele wonders if we should review the 90% renewable by 2050 goal, and supply more information on the restrictions and flexibility. M. Valenta states that this is an overarching state goal, and not enough information is available to make accurate predictions that far in the future.

Energy Use and Generation

K. Waite wonders what is the significance of the comments on the document. M. Valenta explains they will be included into final draft.

B. Morris asks when the 2022-2023 data will be updated or supplied from the Department of Public Service. M. Valenta and C. Dimitruk hope that the data will be coming in the next couple months, but as of right now the Vermont Energy Dashboard has not been updating.

B. Morris is curious how varied hydro energy will be year-to-year depending on weather patterns and climate change. B. Buermann and C. Dimitruk explain that hydro energy is represented in maximum capacity, and the data in the chapter represents the upper limits of our hydro energy.

K. Waite asks if NRPC will have a new proposal for future energy generation expectations. M. Valenta says we are staying just with 2017, and 2021 values... as there are no large current projects in development to account for and a lack of recent data.

Future Targets

P. Zamore questions if there should be targets of energy conservations related to energy use. M. Valenta & C. Dimitruk explain that targets tie back to the state targets, and will be covered in greater explanation in the greater energy plan... we also depend on DPS data to update these targets.

P. Zamore wonders what sufficient generation means, and what target they are related too. C. Dimitruk agrees that this needs to be explained in the text.

B. Buermann asks if the “100 ft wind turbine” rule is to prevent industrial look (aesthetics), and if the construction of “7, 100 ft towers” would be in violation, and what we mean by this goal. Kirk Waite believes we should have a MW generation cap to prevent these types of “confusions”. B. Buermann feels that we need to specify the plan, to ensure non-creation of commercial wind generation.

The committee agrees that there is no room for commercial wind production in the region, but emphasizes that there should be further clarification on what the plan means by “commercial and industrial”. The committee agrees that they should take time for themselves and staff to think of a better solution to the specification.

P. Zamore does not like the caveat that there could be future amendments to the “100 ft rule” from municipalities, and believes that we should have a general overview so there are not constant changes. C. Dimitruk explains that there could be gaps in GIS mapping and potential future tech/opportunities that could allow these conversations with municipalities. P. Zamore does not have a problem with allowing municipalities exceptions, but does not think we need to amend the plan.

The committee agrees that there should/could be exceptions, and that should be stated and allowed in the plan.

Challenges and Opportunities

Various members just want slightly more clear explanation of the SHEI.

Members of the committee would also like clarification on the relationship between energy generation and Chittenden County, and the role the Northwest Region plays in statewide energy generation should still be considered a challenge.

A. Voegele wonders if we should include information about how the SHEI region cannot be easily/affordable upgraded. M. Valenta agrees that this information could be added.

Equity and Affordability

B. Buermann is wondering what “implantation” means, and if it need clarification. A. Voegele thinks “Implementation of goals and policy” is more representative. The committee agrees.

Goals and Policies

P. Zamore wonders if the language should be change so that goals are “reaffirmed”. Committee agrees to include this concept. A. Voegele wonders about the new airport in Highgate, and what the impact on our region will be from carbon planes. C. Dimitruk hopes that the airport will reduce transportation emission but agrees that it is something to keep an eye on.

P. Zamore wants a footnote to explain what the guiding principles standards are set by... M. Valenta explains that the guiding principles will be added in the appendix.

B. Buermann wonders if we should move the equity goals higher, as they appear last in a lot of goals. The committee agrees that it should be moved as it appears at the bottom of many of our plans.

Overview of RPC funding request for Energy and Climate Planner

C. Dimitruk explains proposal for \$1.4 million statewide funding to support energy planning in RPC’s. The NRPC hope to keep the role, and will take further action when the governor’s budget is released.

M. Valenta gives updates on municipal fuel switching bill. It is 3 main parts, \$4000 mini-grants, audits of the municipality’s buildings, and the appropriation of money for the identified upgrades up to \$500,000.

B. Morris wonders why we can not use the previous audit conducting in 2011 for a similar purpose. M. Valenta explains that there could have been improvements and deterioration of facilities and that the audit needs to be recently completed in order to apply for funding.

Meeting was adjourned at 7:55