

**Mendon Planning Commission Minutes (Draft)**  
**May 3, 2021**

**Present:** Justin Lindholm, Gary Sihler, Phil Douglas and Teri Corsones were present via a “Go to Meeting” platform, provided in conjunction with the State of Emergency that Governor Scott has declared, specifically Addendum 6 to Executive Order 01-20 and Act 92, that authorize public bodies to meet electronically.

Before the meeting began, Teri referenced the “Remote Public Hearing Script for Opening a Meeting” that the Vermont League of Cities and Towns has recommended be noted at the start of any electronic public meeting. It provides that instructions for accessing the meeting are on the Town of Mendon’s website. A mechanism for the public to alert the public body during the meeting if there were problems with access is provided in the form of the following email address: [mendonclerk@comcast.net](mailto:mendonclerk@comcast.net).

**TED Associates, LLC:** Teri reported that she spoke with Edward Allen and Mr. Allen is awaiting confirmation from a surveyor or licensed engineer regarding the side yard setback requirements. He was able to locate two pins but not the corner pin. He has also been in touch with the adjoining property owner to the west, who has a survey that may be of help. He will keep the MPC posted on progress made.

**Enhanced Energy Plan:** Annette Smith, environmental consultant, and Barbara Noyes Pulling from the Rutland Regional Planning Commission, kindly responded to an invitation to provide additional information about Enhanced Energy Plans. By way of background, the MPC had worked on a draft Enhanced Energy Plan (EEP) in conjunction with its work on the Mendon Town Plan. There were questions regarding the content that had to be included in an EEP in order for it to be approved. When the pandemic began, it was decided to postpone consideration of an EEP so that the approval process for an updated Mendon Town Plan could continue. The Mendon Town Plan that was adopted August 24, 2020 includes a “regular” energy section on pages 25 – 27.

Annette complimented the MPC on its extensive work regarding the A T & T cell tower application before the Public Utility Commission (PUC). She described the advantages that a town has before the PUC if the town has an EEP in effect, and recommended that the MPC consider submitting an EEP for approval. In light of

the concerns about content, she recommended that the MPC consider a preamble to the plan that clarifies that the data provided by the state is included in the EEP for informational purposes, but should not be used for regulatory purposes. She explained that the EEP need not specify that the data in the EEP is accepted as true, since much of it is based on speculative projections. She also cited long-time RRPC Executive Director Mark Blucher's view that town plans should be visionary and not regulatory.

The primary benefit of a town having an EEP is that the PUC is to give "substantial deference" versus "due consideration" to a town's town plan if the town has an EEP. Annette addressed the question of whether an EEP needs to include "preferred sites" for locating such things as commercial solar panels or commercial wind turbines. She indicated that although designation of preferred sites is recommended, it's not required.

Annette also recommended clear standards for aesthetics in an EEP, versus general statements, and the specific identification of scenic views. Words such as "shall" and "must" are preferable to "encourage" or "may". Annette cited the Bennington Town Plan as an example of one that includes "mass and scale" provisions for commercial solar projects, as well as provisions for mandatory year-round screening for such projects.

Annette also recommended overlaying the Mendon zoning maps with google earth maps, to better delineate which areas are acceptable and which are not for different energy projects. It would be best to specify road names and mountain or ridge names and specific parameters to have clear policies for energy resources. Prime agricultural soils, the scenic bypass route, wildlife corridors, forestlands, rooftop solar projects, solar canopies over parking lots and "close to load" considerations were cited as examples of what would be helpful to address in an EEP.

Barbara explained the process for the town to approve an EEP. There would need to be an MPC public hearing as well as a select board public hearing, similar to the process for adoption of the amended town plan. She recommended a separate ordinance for screening considerations. Members would also like to refine certain aspects of the telecommunications bylaw, based on information that came to light during the PUC process. Barbara indicated that those changes could be made and the same public hearing schedule could apply to the EEP, as well as to any related amendments to the town plan.

The next regular meeting of the Mendon Planning Commission is scheduled for Monday, June 7, 2021 at 5:15 p.m. at the Mendon Town Office via the “Go To Meeting” platform.

Respectfully submitted,

Teri Corsones