

Town of Shaftsbury Planning Commission Regular Meeting

April 10, 2024

In person at Cole Hal and remotely via Zoom

1) Call to order

The meeting came to order at 6:07 p.m. Present were commissioners Nancy Burns (chair), Zoe Contros Kearn, Mike Foley, Emily Cowperthwaite, and Mike Albus. Also present was zoning administrator Shelly Stiles and citizen Annie Smith.

2) Outstanding minutes

Mr. Foley moved to approve the March 27 minutes. Ms. Cowperthwaite seconded the motion, which passed 5-0-0.

3) Public comments

There were none.

4) Enhanced energy plan (EEP)

Ms. Burns referenced comments shared at the last meeting by Samantha Page of the Bennington County Regional Commission that new guidance from the State requires the Plan to mention forestry: are forests to be considered as possible constraints on the development of renewable energy?

Ms. Burns suggested that it would be inconsistent to limit the number of acres of forests that could be cut for solar or wind farms when the town doesn't limit the cutting of forests in any other situation. A five-acre limit on cutting discussed at the last meeting would seem to be indefensible.

In speaking of five acres, the commission turned to a discussion of the maximum size of solar arrays which should be allowed. It had earlier been suggested that twenty acres should be the maximum. Ms. Contros Kearn noted that a five-acre array would serve 850 households. She said that even limited to five-acre arrays, the town could meet its 10.5 Mw-by-2050 goal.

Ms. Cowperthwaite moved to limit solar arrays to five acres. Mr. Foley seconded the motion.

A discussion of the use value (current use) program, limits to town regulation of silviculture, and other issues related to harvesting trees ensued. Mr. Albus moved to prohibit solar development in forests called out in Town Plan map 4.1, "Aquatic and Terrestrial Systems." There was no second.

The original motion passed 5-0-0.

Ms. Burns noted that she'd been told that the EEP's limit on the height of windmills ignores recent technological advances in microwind devices. Ms. Contros Kearn will research.

5) Other business

The next meeting will be held April 24

Mr. Foley moved to adjourn at 6:55 p.m. Ms. Cowperthwaite seconded the motion, which passed by acclamation.