

**Brandon Select Board Hearing**  
**Proposed Energy Plan**  
**August 26, 2019**

**Board Members Present:** Seth Hopkins, Brian Coolidge, Tim Guiles, Doug Bailey, Tracy Wyman

**Others Present:** Dave Atherton, Michael Shank, Brent Buehler

**1. Call to order**

Seth Hopkins, Chair, opened the hearing at 6:30PM.

**2. Public Comments**

Michael Shank provided a presentation on the proposed Brandon Enhanced Energy Plan (See Attachment). Mr. Shank advised towns across the State are developing enhanced energy plans, which is voluntary, and if approved by the Regional Planning Commission will provide substantial deference in the application process for proposed solar sites in Town. The goal of the State is for 90% of energy to come from renewable sources by 2050. For Brandon, some of the goals include decreasing overall energy consumption through conservation and efficiency, reduce reliance on fossil fuels and develop renewable energy resources. The Plan has a focus on transportation, heating & cooling and electricity. The Plan has been developed like the Regional Planning Commission's use of the LEAP modeling (long-range energy alternatives planning). By 2050, the goal is for Brandon to achieve a 33% increase in energy savings, 90% of the light-duty fleet to be electric vehicles and more than 90% of heating energy use to come from renewable sources. Currently, Brandon has almost 3414.3 MWh of total renewable energy, with a potential for 2,627,102 MWh. The Town's target is 14,369 MWh by 2050, which is a fraction of the Town's potential. Mr. Shank noted this indicates Brandon is on the right track and could potentially surpass the State's goal. With help from Regional Planning Commission, the Energy Committee looked at where renewable energy made most sense and the resources mapped were wind, solar, biomass and hydro. The known constraints to avoid will be river corridors, vernal pools, FEMA floodways, wetlands, national wilderness areas and state-significant natural communities. Possible constraints include agricultural soils, protected lands, FEMA special flood hazard areas, Act 250 agricultural soil mitigation areas, deer wintering areas, ANR's Vermont Conservation design highest priority forest blocks and hydric soils. The Energy Committee is not recommending wind, though some small micro-wind sites may be viable in the future. There is a lot of solar potential with approximately 100 sites in Town currently, which include residential. There is no recommendation for hydro and biomass will be viable in the future. It is thought that a view shed analysis is needed. The Regional Planning Commission advised that if the view sheds are not qualified and quantified, it is difficult to have a stance on them. The Regional Commission suggested engaging Middlebury College in assisting with this effort. The viewsheds could then be outlined to protect against any kind of commercial development. The local constraints were mapped, and the energy plan process requires soliciting interest for preferred

locations. There are currently three locations mapped that were approved by the landowners, but inclusion in the Plan does not guarantee that solar would be placed at the sites but would be recommended to solar companies who are considering Brandon for potential projects. The goal is to keep Brandon beautiful and have solar that is appropriate. The PUC prefers roof-mounted systems, former brownfield sites, disturbed areas, sanitary landfills, junkyards and parking lots. The Plan is recommending 76 acres for solar projects and the LEAP modeling indicates there are around 800 prime solar acres in the area. The Energy Plan also outlines the Energy Committee's strategies going forward in working on conservation and efficient use of energy, transportation and land use, which will include public workshops. The Committee will encourage public transportation and biking to utilize the most carbon free transportation as possible.

Seth Hopkins questioned why the Planning Commission solicited the residents interested in being a potential solar site when there are 800 acres that are suitable for solar according to LEAP modeling with no known constraints or possible constraints. Michael Shank advised the Regional Planning Commission advised that the PUC requires the Energy Plan indicate specific sites. Brent Buehler asked if the 76 acres outlined meets the goal for the State. Mr. Shank noted depending on what is placed on those acres, it is possible that they would meet the goal. Mr. Shank advised the three sites chosen are out of sight and if chosen for projects would surpass the need. Mr. Buehler asked if the Town can set a limit not to exceed a certain amount of megawatt hours. Mr. Shank was not aware of any caps on the amount and noted that what is most important is to play a proactive role in the look and feel of the projects and be active in protecting the viewsheds. Mr. Buehler stated a lot needs to come from the State and asked if the screening needs to go through the State to be specific to solar panels. Mr. Shank advised that his understanding is any requirements regarding a visual buffer must apply to all businesses and cannot be a requirement for only solar projects. Mr. Shank agreed a good visual buffer is needed. Mr. Buehler stated he has also read about recycling and there is concern with waste at a project's end. Mr. Shank advised there is an active industry for repurposing of solar panels.

Seth Hopkins advised this was the first of two hearings and the next Energy Plan hearing will be held Monday, September 23<sup>rd</sup> at 6:30PM.

The hearing closed at 6:52PM.

Charlene Bryant  
Recording Secretary