

**Brandon Select Board Hearing
Proposed Energy Plan
September 23, 2019**

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

Others Present: Dave Atherton, Lowell Rasmussen, Jack Schneider, Wayne Rausenberger, Robert Black, Marielle Blaise, Stephanie Jerome, Barry Varian

1. Call to order

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

2. Public Comments

Seth Hopkins advised this is the second hearing of two required hearings regarding the Brandon Enhanced Energy Plan.

Lowell Rasmussen, a member of the Brandon Energy Committee, was present to provide information on the Enhanced Energy Plan. Mr. Rasmussen introduced Jack Schneider of the Energy Committee and Barbara Noyes Pulling of the Rutland Regional Planning Commission, who was instrumental in the development of the Plan. Mr. Rasmussen reported the Plan is driven by Vermont's energy goals. The goal of the State is for 90% of energy to come from renewable sources by 2050. The proposed Plan discusses ways of decreasing overall energy consumption through conservation and efficiency. The three major areas of impact would be in transportation, heating & cooling and electricity, with the current plan dealing more with solar and electricity. The Energy Committee considered the LEAP (Long-range Energy Alternatives Planning) modeling that was provided by the Rutland Regional Planning Commission in moving towards the 2050 target. The model would include a 33% increase in energy savings, a significant change in the types of transportation and continued work on how to handle residential energy in moving it to renewable-based energy.

Mr. Rasmussen noted that of the three major areas, there will be more of a focus on the electrical side, which is where there is the most potential. Brandon is a desirable location for solar projects due to the accessible land and proximity to high voltage transformer lines. It was noted the transformer lines have the capacity for increased solar in this area. The Energy Committee looked at this proactively and the Plan includes a worksheet on potential development that helps create a dialogue with developers. There are currently 75 acres that have been determined to be desirable for solar projects in the area. These areas have been reviewed and have no known constraints such as wetlands, vernal pools, river corridors, etc. It is hoped to keep a running list of these types of properties. There are potentially 700 acres of sitings that can be used in the area and it is thought it will be easy to meet the 2030 State energy goal requirement. The more challenging question is how to manage the transition in the residential sector.

Jack Schneider advised the proposed Energy Plan can be viewed on the Town's website and also include maps of potential biomass, wind and hydro. It was noted there is not a lot of opportunity for hydro. The local schools have already converted to biomass.

Robert Black noted he was a member of an Energy Commission in Anne Arbor, MI and thanked the Energy Committee for the work they have done in developing the Plan. He stated this is a powerful document and is important to Brandon. He advised that public outreach is critical and asked how the Committee will do outreach to build community participation through the schools and other partnership programs. Mr. Black expressed concern that with people lobbying for carbon-neutrality, there could be a push for nuclear energy and suggested Brandon should outline its stand on nuclear. In terms of utility generation, Mr. Black suggested the Town become a municipal utility due to the PUC's requirements. Mr. Black thought the Planning Commission could determine incentives for developers to provide a benefit to the community. He noted the connection between the Energy Committee, Planning Commission and Town government is important. Mr. Black was in favor of a watershed analysis and wished that had been done prior to the Segment 6 project. Mr. Black advised that Brandon has a Downtown Alliance that is working on Brandon greenways and they could be helpful with public outreach in an effort to get people motivated to take Brandon to a stronger initiative. Mr. Black suggested there should be a commitment at the municipal level to see how much town government can become a leader. Mr. Rasmussen advised the Energy Committee has done quite a few workshops and will be hosting a solar workshop in the near future. Michael Shank is also working with the local schools in sponsoring an Energy Film Contest in an effort to get students involved. It is the intent of the Energy Committee to get the community involved.

Dave Atherton reported the Town did a solar array and due to the amount of energy production, the Town received a check for \$32,000.00, which is half of the energy cost for the municipality for the year.

Barbara Noyes-Pulling advised the Energy Plan will become part of the Town Plan. The town plans now have a renewal cycle of 8 years and Brandon's will be up for renewal in 2021.

The hearing closed at 6:48PM.

Charlene Bryant
Recording Secretary