

**Hartford Planning Commission/Town Plan Steering Committee Meeting**  
**Town Plan Housing Chapter Update**  
**Draft Minutes**  
**June 8<sup>th</sup>, 2023**

Planning Commission chair John Reid called the meeting to order at 6:05 p.m. He followed by reading the hybrid meeting script and conducting a roll call.

Attendance: The following individuals attended the meeting which was held at the Hartford Town Hall in Room 1 at 171 Bridge Street in White River Junction on Wednesday, May 31, 2023.

The meeting

was also available remotely and several people participated that way.

Planning Commission & Town Plan Steering Committee Members:

John Reid, Planning Commission, term expires 1/11/24

Dillon Bianchi, Planning Commission 9/5/25

Toby Dayman, Planning Commission, term expires 6/28/24

John Heath, Planning Commission, term expires 3/22/24

Colin Butler, Planning Commission, term expires 7/12/24

Absent:

Bruce Reid Planning Commission, term expires 2/7/25

Staff:

Dana Clawson, Environmental Sustainability Coordinator

Jo-Ann Ells, Zoning Administrator, Department of Planning and Development

Others Present:

Geoff Martin, Norwich Solar

Jesse Pollard, Energy Commission, term expires 12/13/24

Roger Bloomfield, Sterling Springs Development

Susan Bloomfield, Sterling Springs Development

Inge Brown, Sterling Springs Development

Mary Jane Gurdziel, Sterling Springs Development

Nancy Bean, Sterling Springs Development  
Jim Fortmuller, Sterling Springs Development  
Lydia Taylor, Sterling Springs Development  
Julia Trotter, Sterling Springs Development  
Gail Clauson, Sterling Springs Development  
John Hughes, Sterling Springs Development  
Nancy Hughes, Sterling Springs Development  
Sally Bellow, Sterling Springs Development  
Mary Ellen Clarkson, Sterling Springs Development  
Rich Jurgens, Sterling Springs Development

John Reid introduced Jo-Ann Ells and Dana Clawson and explained that the purpose of the meeting was to review the document that the Vermont Law & Graduate School put together to give the Planning Commission and Select Board guidance on designating sites as “preferred sites” for solar arrays followed by Norwich Solar’s request for a site on Braley Dr. to be deemed as preferred for a 500 kW solar array.

*Preferred siting guidance document:*

Dana Clawson explained that last year John Reid had approached him about creating some kind of guidance for the Planning Commission and Select Board on designating *Preferred Sites*, in turn, Dana Clawson and Jesse Pollard, the chair of the Energy Commission submitted this request to Vermont Law and Graduate School and the university agreed to help draft such guidance.

Planning Commission then made their comments and recommendations on the guidance packet.

Colon Butler- Asked to have what a REC is defined.

Dana Clawson- Explained that a solar REC is a Renewable Energy Certificate is created for every megawatt of energy that a system creates. The person that holds that certificate can take credit for the creation of that energy, so when a solar array that is net-metered to the grid creates a REC, that REC typically belongs to GMP as part of the net-metering agreement most systems have with GMP. GMP can then claim that REC as part of it’s clean energy portfolio requirements.

Colon Butler- Asked that the guide defines what a “forest” is.

Toby Dayman- Asked that the guide define “nuisance” as used in the guide.

Dillon Bianchi- Stated that he liked the guide and would like to see it implemented and grow.

John Reid- Asked that the Climate Action Plan be added to the guide as a guiding principle.

Collin Butler- Stated that the guide should clearly state that an Energy Commission review is a required step in Hartford.

John Reid- Commented that he is trying to align what’s happening in the Planning Commission with the Climate Action Plan.

Jessie Pollard- Stated that as the Town’s energy use is increasing it’s share of renewable energy sources should increase as well.

*Norwich Solar Braley Dr. Array Presentation:*

Geoff Martin from Norwich Solar explained that a preferred site designation is required for solar arrays that are between 150 kW and 500 kW. A site can either be designated as a preferred site because the property is a brownfield or there’s circumstances that limit it’s usefulness for much else. If the land does not have such environmental factors it can still be designated as a preferred site if the local Planning Commission, Select Board, and Regional Planning Commission’s all agree that allowing solar at a specific site is in line with the Town Plan’s and Energy Plan.

If the site is designated as preferred by the Planning Commission, Select Board, and Regional Planning Commission Norwich Solar will then have a biologist and wetland specialist perform a survey to determine the impact the array will have on wildlife.

Assuming the survey doesn’t reveal any unforeseen environmental impacts Norwich Solar will then issue a 45 day advanced notice to abutters and the Town to solicit public feedback.

Collin Butler- Asked how close the system will be to the nearest abutters property.

Geoff Martin- 110 feet to the nearest property line.

Toby Dayman- Asked how large the level of disturbance is expected to be.

Geoff Martin- Doesn’t expect disruption on natural resources.

Toby Dayman- Commented that the site won’t be very visible and he doesn’t have an issue with the site.

Dillon Bianchi- Commented that underground wiring is more resilient.

Geoff Martin- Green Mountain Power will perform a study on connecting the array to the grid.

John Reid- Commented that the vegetation and typography appears to negate the need for screening.

Toby Dayman- When is Norwich Solar looking to perform the work?

Geoff Martin- That depend on the Public Utilities Commission.

Toby Dayman- asked how long this system expected to last, how long does Norwich Solar see this system operating.

Geoff Martin- The system is warranted for 25 years and the current lease agreement is for 25 years, but it's really up to the systems owner. The system will then be decommissioned at the end of its life.

Toby Dayman- Who is leasing from whom.

Geoff Martin- Steve Davis own's the property and the land is leased from him, but it's not known who the system owner will be.

Collin Butler- Will there be a fence?

Geoff Martin- Depends on what the Public Utilities Commission requires.

Collin Butler- With previous sites Norwich had agreed to make the remaining property open to the public, or use the property under the array for agriculture, pollinator plants, or sheep grazing, are these possibilities for this site?

Geoff Martin- Norwich is only leasing the land the array sits on, not the rest of the property, as for agriculture, pollinator plants & livestock, it depends if a famer wants to work with them.

Toby Dayman & Collin Butler- How can the Planning Commission be involved after they grant the site preferred siting status?

Geoff Martin- There's the 45 day advanced notice comment period and the Planning Commission and Town can file letters with the Public Utilities Commission.

Toby Dayman- Asked about the map Norwich Solar submitted with different colored zones.

Geoff Martin- It's a map that was created by TRORC to highlight prime areas for solar in Hartford as well as areas that are constrained.

Roger Bloomfield- How will Sterling Spring know if future rain run off is from the solar array or other tree cutting on the property?

Geoff Martin- There's a flood permit from the state that will address that.

Audience member- Since Norwich Solar is only leasing the property that the solar array sits on can they make an agreement with the landowner that he will maintain screening of the array?

Collin Butler- What's to stop Mr. Davis from putting a second system on the property.

Geoff Martin- Any parcel of land is only allowed to have one array.

Roger Bloomfield- Commented that he found in the Town Plan a density growth center and that the one on Braley Dr. is in the Town's growth center. The array will be on land that can be used for housing.

John Reid- Asked if that area has Town water & sewer?

Roger Bloomfield- Sterling Spring has Town Water but its own sewer.

John Hughes- Asked how many homes the array would serve?

Geoff Martin- Wasn't sure at the moment, but a lot.

John Hughes- Asked if Sterling Spring could benefit from the array.

Geoff Martin- Yes.

Roger Bloomfield- What is the process moving forward?

Dana Clawson- Norwich Solar needs the Planning Commission, Select Board, and Regional Planning Commission to deem the site preferred, if any one of those entities turns it down the process ends.

John Reid- Asked Geoff Martin to negotiate on screening and storm water requirements with the property owner and come back to the Planning Commission.

Collin Butler- Stated that Norwich Solar had approached Sterling Spring about putting solar on the "dog leg" section of the property.

Roger Bloomfield- Identified the "dog leg" on the map.

Collin Butler- Made a motion to table the discussion that the discussion is tabled until Geoff Martin negotiates with the property owner. Colin, Toby, & John Heath voted in favor, Dillon and John Reid voted against this.

John Heath- Stated that he believes making requirements beyond the leased land is beyond the Planning Commission's scope.

Collin Butler- Believes the Planning Commission's responsibility expands beyond just the site.

Dillon Bianchi- Stated he is against the site because it could be used for housing.

Collin Butler- Made a motion to adjourn the meeting, John Reid seconded it, it passed unanimously.

Meeting adjourned.