

Town of Waltham
Public Hearing
Proposed Town Energy Plan
Monday, July 11, 2022
7:00 pm
Town Hall

Present: Planning Commission Members Nancy Anderson, Jeff Glassberg, Dan Morris, Chris Von Trapp, Fran Colangelo; Addison County Regional Planning Commission Energy Planner Maddison Shropshire, Waltham Selectboard Members: Don Ross, Andrew Martin and Brent Newton. Public: Anna Sosnowski and Christopher Furey.

Planning Commission Chair Jeff Glassberg provided an overview of the process and reason for the creation of the Waltham Energy Plan. (1) Was to provide a voice for the municipality in the public utility commission's review process of industrial scale power generation. In order for Waltham to have input, it must have an energy plan. (2) The plan reports where we are currently on meeting the State's required renewable energy goals and a pathway for moving forward. It is a policy statement, not a regulatory tool. (3) The plan contains mapping and areas based on state-provided criteria, that are designated as potential sites for energy development and those that are not preferred for reasons- including wetlands, conserved land and others. (4) The plan makes two judgments regarding siting of industrial projects: i) that forest zone (land above 400 feet) is not a preferred site for commercial energy development, and; ii) The Route 7 corridor of Waltham is a preferred area energy development because of access to three phase power transmission capacity and the location of existing solar arrays north, south and within Waltham on that corridor. (5) Adoption of the enhanced energy plan also requires amending the Town Plan for consistency. The enhanced energy plan, is not a zoning document; it is about intent and not legally binding.

Moving forward the group will focus on creating charts and explanations for the different pathways for homeowners to enter into the process of energy planning. They will organize and provide steps not only for the homeowner, but the town planners for reaching new goals for the scorecard. In 2021, the state scorecard was to have Waltham target 1528 meg hours by the year 2025. Currently the town has documented 804 meg. Hours.

Committee members shared their own unique situations of installation of solar power panels or heat pumps and the savings that they had.

ACRPC Energy Planner Maddison Shropshire provided examples of the different pathways that some communities are taking including Panton's Battery Storage and solar array and Bristol's work with Acorn Solar.

Discussion focused on language on page 18 of the plan and if it was leading toward more regulations impacting the homeowner. The conversation included reference to direction of the intent of the document and the regulations in place at the state level. The work of the committee was commended and special note and thanks given to Nancy Anderson for her incredible work on the plan.

Examples and generation of different ideas and pathways were talked about and the planning commission took note of them. Public comment and questions included how many homes have solar?

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What is the meter structure here in Waltham? How many use wind power? Have there been concerns about wind power? Is there any thought of moving toward a community model and how does the state structure for grants work to help the homeowner offset the cost? How would you organize and aggregate people interested in pursuing different energy planning directions?

The meeting concluded at 8:10 pm and the Waltham Selectboard moved back into their paused meeting, where discussion continued. The Selectboard approved two motions (1) To Approve the Waltham Enhanced Energy Plan as presented and (2) To amend the Town Plan to include the New Energy Plan. The motion carried.

Respectfully submitted,

Cookie Steponaitis

Assistant Town Clerk