

Minutes of the combined Meeting of the Sutton Planning Commission and the
Sutton Energy Committee

August 25, 2020

6 PM via ZOOM

1. The meeting was called to order at 6:05 p. m.
2. In attendance were Martha Tack, Energy Committee; Dana Patoine, Energy Committee; Paul Brouha, Planning Commission; Hank Parker, Planning Commission; Alison Low, NVDA and Zoom Host; and Darlene Ahrens, Planning Commission and Energy Committee. Byron Savoy, Planning Commission and Energy Committee attempted to attend by phone but was unable to join due to technical difficulties. There were no additions/deletions to proposed agenda.
3. Reading/acceptance of draft minutes of last meetings was tabled until the next meeting.
4. Old business

The Energy Fair is on indefinite hold until the danger to group gatherings imposed by Covid-19 have been resolved.

Review of the draft Energy Section of the Sutton Town Plan.
Are we ready to recommend the current review draft of the Energy Section to the Sutton Select Board for adoption as an amendment to the Town Plan?

Salient points of the discussion:

* The fundamental theme is to help the residents of Sutton to use energy more efficiently and to not have to spend so much of their income on energy.

*After much discussion about whether the plan is too ambitious or not ambitious enough, it was concluded:

We need challenging targets toward which we can strive.

We need to meet Act 174 planning standards.

The plan is to both meet targets set forth by the state and to reduce Sutton's energy consumption.

The targets are intentionally ambitious in order to get peoples' attention.

If we don't have ambitious targets, we will probably not work very hard to reduce our energy consumption.

We will not be "graded" or penalized in relation to our meeting the goals, so we will just need to do our best.

These goals are necessary to bring about the kind of changes in energy consumption needed during the next 30 years and therefore the plan is good as presented.

*The issue of documentation and "getting credit" for carbon sequestration was discussed. That issue will be explored further with Caledonia County Forester Matt Langlais and state planning officials. Sutton has made a commitment to valuing and fostering working lands in its zoning bylaws. That policy encourages carbon sequestration (conservatively, a ton/year/acre of forestland; we don't have information about agricultural land) in the environment. The effect of this policy should be taken into consideration when assessing Sutton's progress. It is all a part of the larger picture. Finally, the loss of natural carbon sequestration should also be considered when siting large-scale solar arrays in Sutton.

A motion was made by Hank Parker to submit the revised draft Energy Plan to the Select Board for adoption into the town plan. The motion was seconded by Martha Tack and carried unanimously.

5. New business

Darlene reported the Heat Squad underwrote an energy information flyer that was sent out with Sutton's tax bills.

It was agreed to hold off scheduling the next meeting until we have submitted the review draft to the Sutton Selectboard and learned its reaction.

6. The meeting was adjourned at 7 p. m.

Respectfully submitted
Darlene Ahrens