

Memorandum

TO: Rick McGuire, Town Manager

FROM: Planning Commission and Matt Boulanger, Director of Planning

DATE: June 2, 2020

SUBJECT: Energy Plan and Public Health: Proposed Amendments to the 2016- 2024 Williston Comprehensive Plan

With this memorandum, the Williston Planning Commission forwards proposed amendments to the *2016-2024 Williston Comprehensive Plan* to the Selectboard for consideration and possible adoption. On April 21, 2020, and continued to May 5 and May 19, the commission held public hearings for the purpose of hearing testimony concerning a draft of the Williston Energy Plan. On May 5, 2020, and continued to May 19, the commission held a public hearing for the purpose of hearing testimony concerning a draft of the proposed public health amendments. The Commission voted unanimously on May 19, 2020, to forward the proposed public health amendments to Chapters 1-14 and the draft Williston Energy Plan to the Selectboard, both with a recommendation for Selectboard approval. The proposed amendments are available for viewing on the town's website and hard copies are being provided for members of the Selectboard.

Public Health Amendments to the Williston Comprehensive Plan

Public health, originally a cornerstone of good planning, has recently become prominent again as practitioners in both the planning and public health fields refocus on the connection between good public health and good community design. The commission met with staff from the Department of Health in late 2019 to discuss ways in which language in the Town Plan could be amended to reflect this important connection. The Planning Commission received detailed suggestions for improvement and we have incorporated many of these important changes into multiple chapters of the Comprehensive Plan. As part of this revision, minor typos were corrected as well.

Adoption of a Town Energy Plan as an Appendix to the Williston Comprehensive Plan

The Planning Commission proposes the adoption of the attached Williston Energy Plan as an appendix to the *2016-2024 Williston Comprehensive Plan*. The appendix will be incorporated into the full Town Plan when the 2025-2033 plan is written. The current Town Plan, as well the 2011 and 2006 plans, have called for the creation and adoption of an energy plan. This plan has three primary functions:

1. It is a stand-alone document and a supplement to the 2016-2024 Williston Comprehensive Plan;

2. It is a plan to help Vermont achieve the goals of the 2016 State of Vermont Comprehensive Energy Plan (CEP) at the local level;
3. It is a plan to obtain a “determination of energy compliance” from the Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission (CCRPC) that will assure Williston will receive “substantial deference” when siting renewable energy projects within the town.

We would like to thank the Energy Committee members Brian Forrest, G. Miller, Kevin Batson, John Butterfield, Reed Parker, and Carl Peach for their diligent work in 2018 and 2019—29 meetings in all. We also thank Erik Wells for staff support; all the Planning Department staff and Melanie Needle of CCRPC for their technical and general support; and the many experts and citizens who contributed to this plan. Special thanks to Planner Emily Heymann for facilitating the Planning Commission’s subsequent detailed review process over the past nine months.

Some areas warrant continued discussion:

- Renewable Energy projects cannot be subjected to restrictions that would not apply to any development, but we found it hard to support cutting down acres of forest in order to install solar panels. On advice of the PAC, we have left out some language on this topic that we think would be wise to include in future revisions if it can be worked out.
- Dense residential patterns reduce the carbon footprint of those who inhabit them, but the town should not increase density just to save energy. Residential development patterns should be mindful of design, placement in town, long-term maintenance liability, and other effects on the community. In coming up with the statement to “reevaluate” rather than “increase” density in pathways 5.5 and 5.6, the Planning Commission was aware that more intense patterns of development require other considerations. The Planning Commission has it in their workplan to balance these considerations.

We did not think it prudent to delay the Energy Plan while working further on these areas.

Financial Considerations for the Energy Plan

The Williston Energy Plan states in the introduction: *Addressing climate change requires our collective attention and resources on a similar scale to other Town public safety departments.* The driving principle behind the energy plan is that the need for change is urgent and necessary for the well-being of Town citizens, visitors, and businesses. We, as a community, must do what we can to ensure that State goals are met or exceeded and to do this will require a financial commitment by the community. This is a matter of necessity for our community’s well-being as much as a requirement of the State.

General Pathway 1.3 states, “Monitor changes to state and federal policies as they relate to energy plan goals and objectives. Continue to proactively participate in the legislative process. *Seek out funding opportunities beyond existing municipal revenue sources such as utility companies, public-private partnerships, state funding, and federal funding to achieve stated pathways while minimizing burden on*

Williston taxpayers.” For example, the cost estimate table below suggests \$1.28M annually over 30 years for cold-climate heat pumps. This line item would most likely be funded by public-private partnerships, utility companies, incentives, or loans with little or no taxpayer impact.

The Town, to lead and support this effort, will need to spend money at some level and, depending on our collective commitment, could require substantial amounts of money. The Energy Plan Task Force did an excellent job at defining the needs and an estimate of the cost to achieve major goals. ***The minimum suggested by this plan would be to add a position of Energy Coordinator at an estimated \$110K per year. We believe this position to be essential for achieving the goals of this plan.***

To fund major initiatives could require an annual expenditure of up to \$2.95M per year and we expect that there will be a variety of sources of funding available for many of these initiatives (see Table 2). The Energy Coordinator is the right position to seek out those other sources of funding and recommend when and where the town should invest local money (see Table 1). The Planning Commission has not examined all costs and sources of funding but thought it important to share some of the potential costs based on current knowledge.

Timeline and Recommended Action

State law requires that the Selectboard hold two public hearings on proposed comprehensive plan amendments before they are adopted. Staff recommends that the Selectboard consider a motion to schedule public hearings on these amendments at its **DATE and DATE** meetings.

Recommended Motion:

That the Williston Selectboard, having received transmittal of recommended amendments to the 2016-2024 Williston Comprehensive Plan and the Williston Energy Plan from the Williston Planning Commission, schedule and warn public hearings on the proposed amendments for its **DATE and DATE meetings.**

Table 1. Immediate Expenses

Note: annual municipal funding sources are anticipated

| General Pathways | Cost / Year |
|----------------------------------|----------------|
| 1.1 Energy Coordinator (1.0 FTE) | 90,000 |
| Operating Expenses | 20,000 |
| | <u>110,000</u> |

Table 2. Rough Cost Estimates to Achieve Energy Plan Pathways

Note: multiple funding sources beyond tax revenues are anticipated

| General Pathways | Cost / Year |
|--|--|
| 1.1 Assistant Energy Coord. (subsequent years) | 65,000 |
| | <u>65,000</u> |
| Transportation | |
| 2.5 Local public vehicles | 200,000 |
| 2.6 Charging Station | 25,000 |
| | <i>One station. One-time cost.</i> |
| | <i>6605 cars in Williston/30 yrs. = 220 cars/yr. x</i> |
| 2.11 EV Rebates | <i>\$2,500 = \$550,000.</i> |
| | <u>550,000</u> |
| | 775,000 |
| Building Energy | |
| Municipal Energy Audit | |
| 3.3 Review | <i>One-time cost.</i> |
| | 5,000 |
| 3.6 Municipal Energy Audits | <i>One-time cost.</i> |
| | 20,000 |
| 3.8 Residential Energy Survey | <i>One-time cost.</i> |
| | 24,000 |
| 3.9 Residential Energy Audits | <i>2,674 homes/30 yrs. = 89 homes/yr. x</i> |
| | <i>\$400/audit = \$35,600/yr. for 30 yrs.</i> |
| | 35,600 |
| 3.9 Residential Weatherization | <i>2,674 homes/30yrs. = 89 homes/yr. x</i> |
| | <i>\$7,000/home = \$623,000/yr. for 30 yrs.</i> |
| | 623,000 |
| 3.10 Residential Cold Climate Heat Pumps | <i>3,825 homes/30 years = 128 homes/yr. x</i> |
| | <i>\$10,000 = \$1,280,000/year for 30 years</i> |
| | 1,280,000 |
| 3.11 Municipal Recommissioning | |
| | <u>12,000</u> |
| | 1,999,600 |
| Agriculture | |
| 1 Tree Nursery Startup | <i>100 trees x \$500/tree = \$50,000.</i> |
| | <u>50,000</u> |
| | |
| | Total one-time costs |
| | 74,000 |
| | |
| | Total on-going costs |
| | 2,815,600 |