



TOWN OF BENNINGTON

TO: Chair, Town Planning Commissions, Towns of: Glastenbury, Pownal, Shaftsbury, Woodford and Hoosick, NY, and Villages of: Old Bennington and North Bennington, Vermont Department of Housing and Community Development, Bennington County Regional Commission

FROM: Michael McDonough, Chairman, Town of Bennington Planning Commission, 205 South Street

Date: August 28, 2017

Re: Proposed amendment to Bennington Town Plan

Enclosed is one copy of the proposed amendment to the Bennington Town Plan Energy section, and a copy of the report regarding the proposed amendment.

The Planning Commission has scheduled a Public Hearing to consider the adoption of the proposed amendment to the Town Plan on Monday, October 16, 2017 at 6:00 p.m. at the Bennington Fire Facility, 3rd Floor Assembly Room, 130 River Street, in Bennington, Vermont. If the amendment is approved by the Planning Commission, it will be submitted to the Select Board for review and approval.

Per 24 VSA, Chapter 117 § 4384 (e) the Bennington Planning Commission is soliciting comments, especially from Bennington's municipal neighbors and the Bennington County Regional Commission, through this notice.

Please address any questions, comments, or concerns, to my attention at the above address at your earliest convenience. Thank you.

Enc: Proposed amendment to Bennington Town Plan, report, and Legal Notice for Planning Commission Public Hearing.

**PLANNING COMMISSION
NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING
AMENDMENT TO
BENNINGTON TOWN PLAN**

The Bennington Planning Commission will conduct a Public Hearing on Monday, October 16, 2017 at 6:00 p.m. at the Bennington Fire Facility, 3rd Floor Assembly Room, 130 River Street in Bennington, Vermont for the purpose of adopting an amended Energy section of the Bennington Town Plan.

A. STATEMENT OF PURPOSE:

The purpose of the amended Energy section of the Bennington Town Plan is to further the goal of a sustainable energy future in a manner that minimizes environmental impacts and supports the local economy.

B. AREA COVERED

The proposed amendment to the Town Plan impacts all areas of the Town of Bennington.

C. SECTIONS OF PROPOSED AMENDMENT

I. Introduction, II. Energy Use in Bennington, and III. Energy Conservation, Efficiency, and Renewable Energy Strategies.

D. WHERE THE FULL AMENDMENT MAY BE EXAMINED:

Copies of the full text of the proposed amendment to the Bennington Town Plan, and accompanying report, are available for examination at the Bennington Town Office at 205 South Street, in Bennington, Vermont.

Michael McDonough, Chairperson, Town of Bennington Planning Commission

Planning Commission Reporting Form for Proposed Municipal Plan Amendment

Pursuant to 24 V.S.A. §4384(c), which states:

“When considering an amendment to a plan, the planning commission shall prepare a written report on the proposal. The report shall address the extent to which the plan, as amended, is consistent with the goals established in §4302 of this title.”

the Bennington Planning Commission has prepared the following report on the proposed amendment to the Bennington Town Plan, which will receive input at a public hearing scheduled for October 16, 2017.

The Bennington Planning Commission has prepared an Energy Element to be adopted as an amendment to the Bennington Town Plan. The amendment was developed with technical support from Bennington County Regional Commission staff throughout the spring and summer of 2017. The amendment will replace the current Energy Chapter of the Bennington Town Plan (adopted October 6, 2015 and amended April 11, 2016).

The proposed amendment alters the designation of specific land areas in the town by designating preferred sites and preferred areas for commercial solar energy facilities larger than 150kW capacity. Preferred sites are shown on the Solar Energy Resource Map (pg. 27), and preferred areas include the following types of sites: roof-mounted systems; proximity to existing commercial and industrial buildings; proximity to vegetation or topographical features that provide natural screening; former brownfields; and previously disturbed areas such as gravel pits, closed landfills, or former quarries.

Projected impacts on areas surrounding preferred sites include limited increase in traffic to install and maintain electric facilities and no impact on overall pattern of land use. There will be long-term benefits to the municipality from this designation since designated areas will incentivize concentrated renewable energy generation to meet local energy demand. There are no existing areas currently subject to the proposed designation. A majority of newly designated preferred sites are currently vacant or underutilized. Selected areas are advantageous compared to other areas for one or more of the following reasons: selected areas are publicly-owned lands with few possible alternative uses; they are properties where owners are amenable to developing solar energy facilities; areas are previously disturbed areas such as a covered landfill or sandpit; and areas are zoned for commercial/industrial uses. The preferred sites total an appropriate land area (about 350 acres of solar resource within preferred sites) consistent with Bennington’s municipal solar generation target (25.1 MW) identified in the Bennington County Regional Energy Plan (2017).

Otherwise the amendment is consistent with goals established in 24 V.S.A. §4302, and designation changes have no negative impact on these same goals. The intent of the amendment is to support the efficient use of energy, energy conservation, and responsible development of local renewable energy resources.

Copies of the proposed Bennington Town Plan with new Energy Element Amendment are available for review at the Town Offices during regular hours; additional information is available by calling the Town Offices at 802-442-1037.

Michael McDonough, Chair
Bennington Planning Commission

