

DRAFT

City of Newport Planning Commission Minutes  
Tuesday, February 15, 2022

**Members Present:**

John Monette, Chair  
Denis Chenette, Vice-Chair  
Amanda (Mandy) Chaput, Secretary  
Carole O'Connell

**Guests:**

Alison Lowe, NVDA  
Laura Dolgin, City Manager  
George Cudd, Zoning Administrator  
Ann Lawless, Heat Squad – NEK Outreach Coordinator

**Not Present with Regrets:**

Kevin Meade

1. **Call to Order:** Chair Monette called the meeting to Order at 6:04pm.
2. Approval of the Minutes of the Tuesday, February 1, 2022 Planning Commission Meeting. Ms. O'Connell made the motion to accept the minutes, Ms. Chaput made a second. The minutes were approved. Unanimously.
3. **Public Comment:** None
4. **Guest Speaker:** Members introduced themselves as well as position on the commission.
  - a. Ms. Ann Lawless – Heat Squad, One stop shop for Energy Efficiency. NEK Outreach.
    - i. Thermal, Transportation and Electricity
      1. Thermal is the focus of tonight's discussion. Home Energy Audit and helps people get the most out of weatherization and obtain rebates for doing so.
      2. Heat Squad Impact – 5500 Audits, 2100 Upgrades, \$2.1 Million back to the community
      3. What do they do....energy audits, comprehensive reporting, objective advice and support
    - ii. Neighbor Works of Western VT, parent company of Heat Squad.
    - iii. Provides support to improve energy efficiency of buildings, regardless of income.
    - iv. Seeks funding to reduce the audit fee for income approved families

The Heat Squad will assist the homeowner in finding the appropriate contractors who work through the next steps. The Heat Squad acts as a neutral third party. They help the homeowner to review estimates, check for quality and confirm that the work performed is up to code. Heat Squad also helps the homeowner to file paperwork for rebates. They work in partnership with NEETO who has their own crews and Rural Edge. It is possibly that work needs to be done prior to the weatherization and Heat Squad bridges the gap and assists homeowners in connecting with Rural Edge who can access loans and funding.

**Energy Burden = Energy Spending / Household Income.** This is calculated as a percentage of energy cost to income.

NEK Energy Burden – Highest Energy Burden (Electric, Transportation, Thermal)  
NEK Thermal Burden – Highest Thermal Burden

**Goals & Actions:** Form an Energy Committee, Information table at existing Newport Event & Host an Energy Fair

H.518 – Current Legislation – Municipalities – working to become law.

Difference between Efficiency Vermont and Heat Squad....they are separate entities. Efficiency Vermont is State wide energy utility...Heat Squad is a private non-profit. There is a difference between the work that is done and services provided.

Ms. Dolgin invited Ms. Lawless to attend as a speaker and be available at the June 15 Community Summit Update. On the record as a public event this will also be used as an opportunity to share with the community any updates on the municipal plan from the planning commission.

5. **City Development Plan:** Ms. Lowe would love to express the recommendation to have an energy coordinator or committee for the municipal plan. Energy Committee looks like an appointed by select board or city officials. Generally a passionate person. They would report back to the Planning Commission. Committee or Coordinator depends on the demographics of the town or city. Glover is attempting to create a community solar farm. Those who aren't able to place solar or have solar can purchase a share of the solar. VEC has a program which members can purchase and obtain some benefits who are not able to host solar on their property. Community solar is the same premise. Net metering = reduction in electric bill. Ms. Lowe made the suggestion to invite a member of VEC to come and speak.

The Planning Commission supports the creation of an Energy Committee.

Regional Connectivity – Chair Monette points out that the sentence “Both municipalities jointly control this land near exit 27 off Interstate 91 and Pine Hill Road.” Suggestion is to delete the two sentences as they now longer pertain to the overall city plan. The properties in which the hotel complex WOULD HAVE been, may be up for sell and this idea is no longer relevant.

Ferry Service – Is not a relevant service and has not been since the 1800's. Removing the last paragraph (Page 3) which references growth for railroad companies and transportation of waste. The landfill in Coventry will eventually cease its operation.

ZA Cudd wonders why Broadband is not included in the Multi-Modal section of the plan.

Air – “In 2022, the existing 1940s terminal will be replaced with a larger and modern terminal for pilots and passengers”. It is very unlikely that this is happening in 2022. The terminal needs to be updated and made more modern. The airport is classified as one that customs is supposed to inspect and customs fails to do so because they feel that the terminal is inadequate. Remove 2022, and replace with “it is the hope” and it is needs to be stressed that this is a need. The terminal needs to be adequate in order for US Customs to perform their work, and must include modernized bathrooms and comfortable waiting space.

Actions – ZA Cudd suggested adding an action to encourage more industrial development, create incentives (tax incentives (City Council)) – tax stabilization program. (New Market Tax Credits)

Alternative Financing – VEDA – Fill in the blanks that traditional banks do not.

Commission would like to review this draft before it is released to the public. A decision of when to release this will be made at the next meeting.

Ms. Lowe made a recommendation to have a speaker from the Landfill in addition to VEC at the next meeting.

6. **Old Business:** None
7. **New Business:** None
8. Set a draft agenda for the next regularly scheduled Planning Commission Meeting on Tuesday, March 1, 2022 at 6:00pm. Agenda will be similar to the agenda for tonight.
9. **Adjourn.** Motion made to adjourn by Ms. O'Connell and seconded by Mr. Chenette at 8:15pm

Respectfully Submitted by Amanda (Mandy) Chaput, Secretary  
Unofficial Until Approved

Approved this \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 2022

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Chair, City of Newport Planning Commission