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3 **Town of Charlotte**
4 **PLANNING COMMISSION**
5 **Meeting Conducted at Town Hall and via Teleconference**
6 **September 18, 2025**

7
8 ***DRAFT – subject to approval by the Planning Commission***

9 **Planning Commission:** Matt Krasnow (Chair), Bill Stuono, Ken Smith, Carrie Spear, Linda Radimer,
10 Ashley Berliner. Absent: Robert Bloch (Vice Chair).

11 **Staff:** Lindsay Kahn, Town Planner, Nicole Burnell, Recording Secretary.

12 **OTHERS:** Frank Tenney, Charles Russell, JD Herlihy, Alexa Lewis, Deirdre Holmes, Darren Schibler,
13 Sam Carlson, Matthias Dean Carpenter, Lynn Farr, Bill Far, Margaret Russell, Michael Russell, Celeste
14 Laramie, Kristen Destigter, Patricia Lavalette.

15
16 ***Posted Agenda:***

17 7:00 PM Call to Order
18 7:01 PM Changes to Agenda (if any); Public Comment (for items not on the agenda)
19 7:03 PM Review & approve draft PC meeting minutes: September 4 meeting
20 7:05 PM Discuss August 28, 2024, Thompson’s Point Table
21 7:15 PM Encore Renewables
22 7:40 PM Discuss the Energy Section updates to the Town Plan (CCRPC)
23 8:10 PM Discuss LUR Section 4.12 Mixed Use
24 8:50 PM Draft next agenda
25 8:55 PM Updates from around Town
26 9:00 PM Adjourn
27

28 **Call to Order:**

29 Matt Krasnow called the meeting to order at 7:04pm.
30

31 **Changes to Agenda (if any); Public Comment (for items not on the agenda):**

32 Matt noted that the Town Planner suggested to table the 7:05pm agenda due to time constraints.
33

34 **Review & approve draft PC meeting minutes: September 4 meeting:**

35 **MOTION by Matt Krasnow; seconded by Carrie Spear, to approve the PC meeting**
36 **minutes for September 4, 2025, as amended. VOTE: 5 ayes, motion carried.** Ashley Berliner
37 abstained.
38

39 **Encore Renewables:**

40 Matt introduced Sam Carlson and Matthias Dean Carpenter from Encore Renewables. Sam
41 opened with a brief overview of Encore Renewables. Sam then introduced Michael and Margaret
42 Russell, landowners, to the proposed projects.

43 Sam noted that discussions for the projects began in 2020 and have had many iterations since.
44 The presentation will focus on the current. Sam said the Planning Commission received an Advanced
45 Notice document in July, which included a site plan and mapping of natural resources. The Advanced
46 Notice was also sent to all adjoining landowners and state agencies.

47 Sam then discussed the two projects. The first being a 5-megawatt solar project which will
48 consume approximately 20 acres. The second project is the battery energy storage (also 5-megawatt)

49 project which will be positioned on the southeastern corner of the Russell's parcel. There is also
50 proposed landscaping to reduce the views of both projects.

51 Sam discussed how battery energy storage appeals to Green Mountain Power as it will allow for
52 storage of excess energy produced during the summer months and prevent having to purchase peak
53 capacity electricity from Massachusetts or Connecticut. This is known as peak shaving which reduces
54 rates.

55 Sam noted that the arrays would have power from the battery in the event of an outage, would
56 assist in the state's renewable energy goals, and help combat climate change.

57 Sam said the estimated life expectancy for both projects is 25 years. The array project will bring
58 in \$9,500 annually in tax revenue to Charlotte, the battery project an additional \$5,000 annually. Over
59 25 years, approximately \$360,000 when combining the two. There would be additional state taxes paid
60 in. Further, Encore offers community donations which are determined by megawatt. For these projects,
61 an additional \$20,000 that could be utilized at the town's discretion.

62 Sam then discussed how the seeming primary concern for both projects is compliance with the
63 Town Plan. Encore has reviewed Charlotte's Town Plan, including the energy section, where targets to
64 increase renewable energy generation were found. Sam emphasized that Encore would minimize any
65 public views, he referenced the site plan which depicts use of underground connectivity to Green
66 Mountain Power and the preservation of wetlands.

67 In reference to the proposed timeline, Sam said the application to the Public Utility Company is
68 lengthy (400 pages) and will include thorough impact analysis through various studies. Charlotte will
69 receive a copy of the application once submitted. The hope is that the application will be prepared for
70 submission by February 2026, if all goes well, construction in 2027 and operational in 2028. Sam then
71 opened the discussion to Planning Commission questions and comments.

72 Ken Smith asked about life expectancy and what happens after 25 years. Sam said that
73 decommissioning, and funding (via bonds) for decommissioning, are part of both projects. The projects
74 are reviewed with current landowners at the end of the 25 years. Ken then asked if the tax revenue to be
75 paid by Encore would be in addition to property taxes. Sam confirmed it would be. Ken questioned if the
76 inverter would be enclosed to reduce noise pollution. Sam spoke to minimal audibility.

77 Matt asked about the engagement of the Planning Commission moving forward. Sam responded
78 that a letter of endorsement is an option. Another being to identify aspects that might be contrary to the
79 Town Plan. Once the application is filed with the Public Utility Commission, the Planning Commission
80 can then legally intervene.

81 Bill Stuono asked if the railroad might take issue with battery storage being in proximity to the
82 tracks. Sam responded that there has not been any opposition, rather a land agreement and endorsement.
83 Bill then asked about the potential benefit to Charlotte during power outages, which are not uncommon
84 in the wintertime. Sam answered that certain Green Mountain Power, power circuits, would benefit.

85 Matt read public comments received. The first referenced that Land Use Regulations (LURs)
86 have a maximum fence height of 6 feet. The proposal reflects 7-8 feet fencing. Matt acknowledged that
87 this is standard for solar but asked for further consideration. Matt then said there is a resident that would
88 like to discuss gravel access road locations. Sam said that Encore had addressed this with an abutter that
89 responded to the Advanced Notice.

90 Linda Radimer asked about the findings from the Natural Resources Assessment. Sam
91 referenced grassland bird habitat and the need to mitigate. Other aspects studied included rare,
92 threatened, and endangered species, both plant and animal, wetlands, water and air quality, sound, etc.
93 Analyses were completed externally to Encore.

94 Deirdre Holmes endorsed the projects and felt they align with the energy section of the Town
95 Plan.

96 Celeste Laramie, attorney for adjoining landowners Kristen Destigter and Joshua Clemens, said
97 that the letter that she had submitted to the town was not included in the packet of materials, and noted

98 the exclusion of her clients from the list of adjoining landowners. Celeste said that some of the maps
99 submitted in support of the proposed projects are inaccurate or misrepresenting what the project is going
100 to be. In example, use of her client's land as an easement, without consent or legal right to do so. In
101 response, Sam pointed to an updated Natural Resources map and a meeting that previously occurred
102 with Celeste's clients to discuss and address concerns.

103 Matt revisited proposed timeline. Sam reviewed all that must occur before application
104 submission in February and noted that February is optimistic. Matt then asked if Encore has its own
105 maintenance or if that is subcontracted. Sam responded that Encore has an Asset Management Team and
106 use of sheep instead of mowers.

107 Bill said the Planning Commission is obligated to provide feedback on the proposed projects.
108 Bill then asked about safety risks associated with battery energy storage. Sam said it is not without risk
109 but spoke to advances in safety and self-shut-off features before any thermal runaway. In addition, an
110 internal fire suppression system, onsite training for the Fire Department, and funding for any necessary
111 personal protective equipment.

112 Linda asked how the Russell property was identified as a prospective site. Sam referenced
113 Encore's Business Development Team and how the property was identified for its unique features.

114 Matt suggested a second meeting in January 2026 as application submission approaches. Sam
115 will reach out to schedule.

116 Patricia Lavalette asked about any impact to water quality from runoff. Sam responded that
117 rainwater hits the arrays and drips into the soil, solar modules are sealed. No foreseeable impact on
118 water quality. Bill referenced living next to Charlotte Solar. Specifically, that installation had a heavy
119 impact on the soil clay. During heavy rain with runoff, the neighborhood experiences flooding. Bill
120 proposed the Planning Commission request minimal disturbance of the soil. Matthias asked when
121 Charlotte Solar was installed. Matt responded 2012. Matthias said that new rules for stormwater
122 management have been enacted since then.

123 Carrie Spear asked about durability. Outside of intentional destruction, arrays are built to
124 withstand any severe weather.

125 Kristen Destigter clarified that the brook on the Russell's property runs into Lake Champlain.
126 Further, contiguous with the Russell's parcel in a known bobolink preserve.

127 Frank Tenney referenced applicable LURs and suggested the Planning Commission review.
128

129 **Discuss the Energy Section updates to the Town Plan (CCRPC):**

130 Darren Schibler, Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission (CCRPC), in attendance to
131 present initial edits to the energy section of the Town Plan. These are primarily updates to data and
132 technical requirements. Darren said the Energy Committee Chair, Deirdre Holmes, would be working on
133 the policy and content edits.

134 Darren started with updates to the *Charlotte today* section which included goals from the State
135 Comprehensive Energy and Climate Action Plans, along with minor technical updates. Darren noted that
136 there has been a significant increase in electric vehicle registration in Charlotte. Home heating has not
137 changed significantly. However, there has been an increase in home energy efficiency projects. There
138 was a slight increase in electricity utilization, which is to be expected with electric vehicles and electric
139 heating, which was offset by the increase in residential solar panels, and slight increase in wind power in
140 Charlotte.

141 Within the same section, Darren moved to *modeling for the future*. Darren pointed to the
142 prediction for a scale-back in the number of commercial weatherization projects to align with residential
143 weatherization. Darren noted that heat pump goals for the region are specific to mini splits. Mini splits
144 are not expected from commercial projects as these are typically centrally ducted systems. Regarding
145 residential heat, the model predicts less wood heating. This is a default prediction and can be changed.
146 In terms of electric efficiency, the savings from fluorescent to LED lighting caused an uptick which

147 cannot be sustained. Darren said it is important to note the shift from fossil based to electricity despite
148 removal of tables to reflect. Darren pointed out that land available for renewable energy generation has
149 not significantly changed due to lack of analysis. Darren noted that renewable energy potential exceeds
150 targets, and megawatt targets have increased. Darren opened the discussion for Planning Commission
151 questions.

152 Linda asked about CCRPC collaboration with Green Mountain Power. Darren responded that
153 there is not any direct coordination.

154 Bill asked about site layout for solar access and energy efficiency and the potential to add clauses
155 to the Town Plan update. Darren answered that it is up the town and suggested the Energy Committee
156 consider and present feedback to the Planning Commission.

157 In closing, Darren pointed to the section that outlines how Charlotte can meet its renewable
158 energy targets. Specifically, the changed numbers may seem drastic due to inaccuracies previously noted
159 coupled with increased targets.

160 Deirdre did not have specific comments when asked for feedback. Matt suggested a meeting
161 between the Energy Committee and Planning Commission once the Committee has had the chance to
162 review and generate feedback.

163

164 **Discuss LUR Section 4.12 Mixed Use:**

165 Matt suggested tabling the agenda item due to time constraints. Lindsey Kahn requested a
166 hearing date be set and asked if the suggestion for October 16th worked for Planning Commission
167 members. Bill stated concern that the Planning Commission would not be prepared by that date. Lindsay
168 suggested a brief review of work that had occurred to date.

169 Lindsay had collaborated with the Development Review Board Chair, Charles Russell, and
170 Selectboard Vice Chair, Frank Tenney. One topic explored was whether Accessory Dwelling Units
171 (ADUs) are allowed for duplexes as they are permitted with single-family homes. Frank asked if
172 someone has a single-family home, and business, in a mixed-use scenario, is an ADU permitted.
173 Lindsay noted that Frank did not pose that question during previous collaborations.

174 Lindsay moved to whether in a mixed-use scenario, a duplex is allowed. Through consultation
175 with Darren/CCRPC, it was determined that they are. The outstanding question then becomes, would an
176 ADU also be permitted. Bill said in his perspective of mixed-use, duplexes are not allowed by right. Bill
177 said a standalone single-home is different from a duplex within a commercial building.

178 Matt noted the intent is to ensure applicable LURs comply with Act 47. JD Herlihy said how to
179 attain compliance needs to be considered. Charles Russell suggested clarification for the definition of
180 mixed-use and asked if it is strictly combining residential and non-residential uses, or two residential, or
181 two commercial uses.

182 Matt directed the conversation back to setting a hearing date. Lindsay said the proposed October
183 16th date would not work if the intent could be to make significant changes when the Planning
184 Commission revisits the topic on October 9th as 15-day notice is required. Matt said that this is not the
185 intent for October 9th rather to review work previously done by Lindsay, Charles, and Frank. Speaking
186 of this, Lindsay said the definition for mixed-use was clarified to mean combining residential and non-
187 residential and edits to tables for dimensional clarity. Bill asked about the edit for no minimum density
188 for non-residential use. Lindsay said this previously read no minimum density for residential portions.
189 Matt again asked to focus on hearing date, non-substantial edits can be made on October 9th. JD asked
190 for the rationale behind proposed changes. Lindsay noted to meet grant funding requirements. JD did not
191 feel that was true rationale.

192

193 **Draft next agenda:**

194 Matt suggested significant time be allocated towards review of edits and understanding of
195 Section 4.12. Ashley agreed and said that minimal time could be allocated to the review of the August

196 2024 Thompson's Point memo. Matt said this will occur on October 16th. Lindsay said the review of the
197 housing section of the Town Plan also requires immediate action and proposed pushing Thompson's
198 Point out. Bill asked if the October 16th hearing date is feasible. Lindsay said that it is. Matt asked if
199 there was consensus to dedicate the entire October 9th meeting to hearing preparation. Bill asked for
200 discussion on the Encore presentation and spoke about the importance of providing feedback on
201 conformance of the proposal with the Town Plan. Bill suggested that Lindsay produce a staff report on
202 the project. Matt did not agree with Bill's suggestion as Matt views the proposal as a preemptive
203 application that can be addressed in January before application submission. Bill felt that January does
204 not allow for efficient time for response to suggestions.

205

206 Updates from around Town:

207 None.

208

209 Adjourn:210 **MOTION by Ashley Berliner; seconded by Linda Radimer, to adjourn the meeting.**211 **VOTE: 6 ayes, motion carried.** The meeting was adjourned at 9:28p.m.

212

213 Minutes respectfully submitted:

214 Nicole Burnell, Recording Secretary