

9-LOT SUBDIVISION & PUD SKETCH PLAN

Owner: Wind Energy Associates & Jan Blomstrann 110 Riggs Road, Hinesburg, VT 05461	Applicant: same
Surveyor/Engineer: Maclay Architects	Property Tax Parcel: 16-20-56.900 Approx. 66 acres

BACKGROUND

Wind Energy Associates, owned by Jan Blomstrann, is requesting sketch plan approval for a 9-lot subdivision and Planned Unit Development (PUD) for a project located on Route 116, Riggs Road and CVU Road on the property that includes and surrounds the Renewable NRG Systems facility. The property is currently comprised of eight parcels that total approximately 66 acres. The majority of the property is in the Village Northeast zoning district. Approximately five acres in the southeastern corner of the property is in the Residential 1 zoning district. Multiple parcels are involved, but the primary tax map parcel number associated with the project is 16-20-56.900. There are quite a few previous subdivision and other approvals for the property in question, both before and after the construction of the Renewable NRG Systems facility.

Natural features include a steep hillside which forms the backdrop to the property and essentially divides the northern portion from the southern portion. The spine of the hillside runs east from ledge outcroppings on Route 116 to the height of land where an existing wind turbine is located. Water resources include substantial wetland areas: a wetland associated with a small stream in the northwestern corner, and a larger wetland complex along Patrick Brook in the southeast corner. The Patrick Brook area also includes FEMA flood hazard and fluvial erosion hazard zones. Agricultural soils pervade the property, with the exception of the steeper hillside slopes and the wetland areas.

The Hinesburg Official Map shows that a variety of future public infrastructure is planned for the subject property. These elements include:

- a. Improvements to the Route 116, Riggs Road intersection – e.g., roundabout, traffic signal, 4-way intersection, etc.
- b. An extension of Riggs Road to the northeast to create a through road from Route 116 to CVU Road around the hill.
- c. Sidewalks along the aforementioned through road as well as along the Route 116 frontage.
- d. One trail from CVU Road to Riggs Road on the western side of the property – through the area proposed for development. A second trail along the south and southeast sides of the property from Route 116, along the Patrick Brook corridor, headed toward Mechanicsville Road.
- e. A riparian park area along Patrick Brook and its associated wetlands along the south and southeast portions of the property.

The current proposal is for 101 dwelling units (including 36 units of senior housing in a single building), and approximately 178,000 square feet of new non-residential building space (office, manufacturing, light industrial). Three of these dwelling units (lots 5, 6, 7) were previously

approved, but have not yet been constructed. This is in addition to the existing Renewable NRG Systems building on proposed lot 4, which is approximately 71,686 square feet (all floors) with a footprint of approximately 56,000 square feet. Residential uses are proposed to the north of the hillside with single family homes located on lot 9 and multifamily dwellings farther south on lot 8. These 62 northerly dwelling units would be served by a new road with access to CVU Road. The three previously approved home site lots (5-7) are located near the top of the hill with access via a planned extension to Riggs Road. The number of residential dwellings is below the base density, and well below the maximum allowed pursuant to section 2.4.2 (Zoning). No density bonuses appear to be needed, and none are proposed at this point.

Non-residential uses and senior housing are proposed to the south of the hillside with a “campus center” area of four new buildings (2A, 2B, 2C, 2D) due west of the existing Renewable NRG Systems facility. The senior housing is shown on lot 2. The other three non-residential buildings are shown on lot 1. Three additional office/manufacturing buildings are depicted south of Riggs Road (1A, 1B, 1C) on lot 3. This portion of the project would be served by Riggs Road. The north and south sides of the project would be connected via sidewalks and paths, which would also provide connections to the existing village area sidewalk system. The entire project is proposed to be served by municipal water and sewer.

The Applicant indicated that the segregation of single family homes and multi-family dwellings on lots 8 & 9 is made necessary by lending agencies practices (Fannie Mae & Freddie Mac); however, open spaces, recreational areas, gardens, sidewalks, and paths will be shared by all to help integrate the neighborhood. Both residential lots will be limited interest community ownerships with limited common element areas identified around the units. The senior housing and non-residential portion of the master plan shows seven proposed buildings. The Applicant indicated that the larger footprint buildings south of Riggs Road (1A & 1B) would likely be one-story, and the smaller buildings north of Riggs Road (2A, 2B, 2C, 2D) would likely be two or three-story buildings – some with under building parking. Several areas across the entire project have been identified for potential stormwater treatment. The Applicant indicated that these are simply placeholder areas, and that the project intends to utilize low impact design practices and treatment measures the fullest extent that the soils and the site allow.

ISSUES – pay particular attention to underlined sections

1. **Water & Wastewater Capacity (Section 5.1.8 & 5.1.9, Subdivision; Section 4.8, Zoning)**
- Recent reviews of other projects (Haystack Crossing & Hinesburg Center Phase 2) along with the November 2014 municipal bond vote on improvements to the Town water supply system clarified that the Town does not currently have the capacity to serve this project. The new Town wells scheduled to come online in the fall of 2015 will replace two problematic wells that serve current users. The new wells will not add substantial new capacity to the water system, so additional water system improvements (i.e., one or more wells) will be needed to serve this project. The Town is actively exploring sites for additional wells. No decisions have been made and timing remains uncertain for this future water supply expansion. With that said, the evidence indicates that additional water capacity is possible and is actively being explored by the Town. If this project receives sketch plan approval, it

should be conditioned on the need to present a solution to the water capacity issue as part of any preliminary plat application.

As of the most recent Uncommitted Reserve Capacity report (6/19/2014) for the municipal wastewater treatment facility, there is enough capacity to serve the residential portion of the project. Per the capacity report, the Town has 40,908 gallons per day of uncommitted residential reserve capacity remaining. The Applicant estimates the project's new residential wastewater demand to be 17,052 gallons per day – 62 units x 210gpd/unit = 13,020 gpd, and 36 senior 1-bdrm apartments x 140gpd/bedroom minus 20% for low flow fixtures = 4,032gpd. Adequate capacity for the 178,000 square feet of proposed non-residential building is less clear. Per the capacity report, the Town has 17,532 gpd of uncommitted enterprise/commercial capacity remaining. The Applicant estimates new non-residential wastewater demand to be approximately 4,644 gpd based on the potential number of employees (derived from building sizes) – 387 employees x 15gpd/employee minus 20% for low flow fixtures. Clearly the Town has this capacity; however, the Applicant honestly doesn't know what additional "process" water flow might be needed for the manufacturing and light industrial uses. Depending on the business, this additional flow could be negligible (e.g., product assembly) or very substantial (e.g., brewery, cheese processor, semi-conductor manufacturing).

2. Open Space on Flat Ground (Section 5.1.4, Open Space & Recreation, Subdivision) -

The project includes a lot of greenspace (wetland areas, forested hillside, hilltop meadow area, etc.); however, the design only creates a small amount of purposeful open space on flat or easily accessible grades. Places that could be used for kids and families to play toss, pick-up soccer, or kickball, as well as places to serve as neighborhood gathering areas and community gardens. The one area designed for this type of use is the triangular green at the center of the "Meadow Townhomes" shown on sheet 10a. A central green is a nice design feature, but this one is only about a third of an acre in size with a portion anticipated to be community gardens and a portion for open space. This seems undersized given the 46 multi-family dwelling units on lot 8 that will rely on this space, along with the 16 single family dwellings on lot 9 that may also utilize it. The Meadow Townhome units and associated road on the north side of the green occupy the most accessible/flat grades in this area. If these units were removed or relocated, the green could be enlarged substantially, and views opened up to the wetland area to the north – thereby making the space seem even larger.

3. Hillside Forest Clearing (Section 5.1.3, Cultural Features Protection, Subdivision) -

It appears that additional clearing for gardens is proposed downhill and across the access road to the three previously approved single family lots (lots 5-7). Significant effort was invested in creating lots that didn't require more clearing than was necessary for the houses and other uses on the lots. The subdivision regulations in effect when these lots were created required that development, "...*be within any woodland contained in the parcel, or along the far edges of the open fields adjacent to any woodland (to reduce impact on agriculture, to provide summer shade and shelter from winter wind, and to enable new construction to be visually absorbed by natural landscape features.*" The regulations have changed since then, and the current design standards for the Village Northeast district don't include this standard. These previously approved lots, are a bit of an incongruity under the current district guidelines,

which encourage a compact built landscape. They are not connected to the rest of the compact built landscape in this project, and the woodland that is in front of them was thoroughly discussed and accepted as necessary to keep them integrated into the wooded hillside. These lots are large enough to have gardens located on them and not have to clear additional land in front of them.

4. **Solar Collector Location/Arrangement (Section 5.1.1, 5.1.2, Subdivision)** - Ground mounted solar collectors are suggested as a possibility in the wetlands and flood hazard area between Patrick Brook and the structures to the north. Another possible area for solar is indicated on the hillside above the existing Renewable NRG Systems building. The Town doesn't have direct permitting authority over such renewable energy installations as they are reviewed by the Public Service Board. Renewable energy technology is clearly called for in the purpose statement of the Village Northeast district (section 3.7), including concentration or co-location for the benefit of uses within the district. With that said, this component of the project should be sensitive to the sensitive site features – e.g., floodplain, wetlands, steep forested hillside. The Applicant should be encouraged to consider locating solar collectors in the southerly field farther east with an arrangement so that they don't dominate the view of this development from the rest of the village and Route 116. If the field of collectors is installed behind the existing structure then the clearing limits for the upper three lots should be revisited so that some screening remains for these highly visible lots and residences. They should be integrated into the hillside which forms the backdrop for this entire project.
5. **Parking – Buildings 2A-D (Section 5.5, Zoning)** – Only a small amount of surface parking is proposed to serve buildings 2A, 2B, 2C (senior housing), 2D. The Applicant is proposing underbuilding parking to provide the rest of what will be necessary. If this project receives sketch plan approval, it should be conditioned on the need to present engineering plans to demonstrate that this underbuilding parking will work as part of any preliminary plat application. Also, the plan appears to show the loss of a small existing parking area next to building 1C. This should also be addressed at preliminary plat review, based on the existing and projected parking needs for Renewable NRG Systems.
6. **Phasing & Municipal Services (Section 5.1.11, Subdivision; Section 4.8, Zoning)** - As discussed during the Haystack Crossing and Hinesburg Center Phase 2 project reviews, this project, along with other forthcoming and previously approved developments will trigger the need for additional Town staff and capital equipment. Phasing of this project will be an important conversation as the review moves forward to ensure that necessary infrastructure and municipal resources are available (e.g., sidewalk maintenance, fire protection, etc.).

We have not asked the Applicant to provide an estimate of how many school-aged children this project would create. Feedback on school capacity was received in February 2015 from Bob Mason at the Chittenden South Supervisory Union. His analysis appears to have been based in part on an earlier estimate of possible new housing units provided by the Director of Planning & Zoning on August 8, 2014. That earlier estimate projected new dwelling units for the larger projects approved or recently proposed (e.g., Haystack, Hinesburg Center, etc.) including 40 new dwelling units for this project rather than the 62 actually proposed. With that said, given the recent denial of the Haystack Crossing project sketch plan, it would

appear that the Wind Energy Associates project would not in and of itself overwhelm school capacity. As noted in Bob Mason's correspondence, this should be re-evaluated on a regular basis (e.g., every two years per his suggestion).

7. **Traffic Congestion & Access (Section 5.1.6, Transportation, Subdivision)** - Per feedback from the Town Road Foreman, the three proposed accesses proposed on CVU Road (one road and two driveways) should be consolidated. We also recommend planning for a pedestrian connection and Route 116 crosswalk at the height of Route 116 (where there is good site distance/visibility) to connect this project with any future development on the Haystack Crossing LLC property to the west. Furthermore, given the size of the project, lack of connecting through roads, and existing Route 116 traffic congestion, a traffic study will be needed for any preliminary plat review. It should be noted that access to the main portion of the residential development is proposed as a dead end road. A connection through to Riggs Road would be extremely difficult given hillside that separates the northern and southern portions of the property. Furthermore, the Town's Official Map and the northern gateway design standards (section 5.22.4, Zoning) does not encourage the creation of additional Route 116 road cuts in the project area. As such, a dead end access road from CVU Road appears to be the only option.

Respectfully submitted,

Peter Erb & Alex Weinhagen

cc: Applicant