

November-December 2020

Comments on draft DRI Energy Policy

*This document will be updated as further comments are collected in December and January. The comments here are not necessarily verbatim.*

MV Commissioners (11/12/20 and 11/19/20)

- Michael Kim: There are cases where all-electric systems use more carbon than fossil fuel systems. Example of tankless water heaters.
- Adam Turner: Have we met with propane and oil businesses?
- Trip Barnes: Why not consider nuclear power?
- Applicants may want to see something more specific to their project.
- Jim Vercruyse: Give examples of projects where the policy was met, especially in regard to electric vehicles.
- Jim Joyce: What is happening with net metering in MA? Is it going away?
- Doug Sederholm: The solar alternatives might be a heavy lift for some applicants.
- Jim Vercruyse: Question of linking applicants to outside entities in regard to solar alternatives.
- Kathy Newman: Should we have a list of options for the solar alternatives, or more established efforts they can buy into?
- Doug Sederholm: Include review provision – every 18 months.
- Christine Todd: How do we enforce the policy?
- Michael Kim: Object to onsite solar requirement. Solar panels could be placed on buildings with higher energy use instead.
- Michael Kim: Mandate seasonal shutdowns for seasonal properties? (MVC could file an application to the BBRS to get around insulation requirements.)
- Fred Hancock: Need more give and take for commercial projects, which generally have more limitations.

Fred Hancock (MV Commissioner) (11/20/20)

- It's a stretch to say the policy would have any direct effect on climate change. Lead with "reliability of supply" and "economic impacts" before "climate mitigation."

Newell Shinn (MVBA) (11/21/20)

- Two issues MVBA members will raise: The Brookline precedent, and fear that MVC is doing something illegal. Policy committee needs concise, comprehensive answers.
- When you are presenting it, have a cover that reminds people what the DRI process is, and list the policies. MVC has a range of policies that together say how they want a project to behave. Make it clear that the energy policy is treated the same as the others.

Adan Hayes (MVBA) (11/21/20)

- MVBA members will be confused about how the policy connects to the big house discussion (Checklist item 4.2). The policy committee needs to clarify that it has nothing to do with 4.2 or big houses, and that this is a policy with a program already in place.

Kate Warner (West Tisbury energy committee) (11/30/20)

- Suggested edits to the benefits section, including removal of language related to the reliability of supply and fossil fuel price fluctuation
- Mention goal of having the policy encourage towns to reduce GHG emission in the building sector
- Include all electric systems in bullet points in section 2
- The energy code is about to meet the stretch code, so some language in section 2 could be removed

Chilmark selectmen (12/1/20)

- What other feedback have you gotten?
- What if we had a proposal to rebuild the gas station in Menemsha with a new dock, but they want to knock down building and rebuild the gas station, how would this policy affect the project?
- What is the difference here between a policy and a guideline?
- What is the timeline to go through and make notes on the policy?
- Would this policy apply to individuals trying to build an affordable house, such as at Peaked Hill?

Oak Bluffs selectmen (12/8/20)

- Brian Packish: Many people have reached out to me. At first glance, I look at energy efficiency standard and think no big deal, we are all at or about to adopt stretch code. The 100% solar requirement is more problematic. I understand this is just a guideline, but the guideline becomes the minimum bar. In our downtown, we have very small footprints and roof areas. Simply not enough roof area to get there. So you are looking at an offsite scenario. Couple that with the affordable housing requirement. Layers that become counter intuitive to the end result goal. If you had a mixed use building downtown, to get to 100% solar you are looking at an offsite scenario where you need to buy rent or lease other property, or buy credits from other folks. If you are just adding solar to other homes, you need X amount. Disagree with the statement that the expense to applicants is minimal. With the Lamppost project, it was cost about \$200,000 for a transformer to meet the energy requirement. For every push there is a pull. We need to be mindful. 100% offsite solar as an option is good, but if we hold people to that, it will become highly problematic in our downtown.

All of the slides presented are accurate. We are ahead of curve, we need to be mindful and do better. As we talk about mandating, we are talking about largest projects on MV (DRIs). So we need to be mindful of our workforce. Many people earn a living by supporting homes, but they can be retrained. To enact an energy policy, it is MVC's responsibility to create a reeducation component to incentivize people to go further. This will impact them and families. That is not to diminish how climate change affects them, but we need to think about them as well. Anytime we take steps, it is inevitable to push or pull in different directions. It's hard to see the harm on the other side of it. At the end of the day, there are reasonable steps that could be included to address things I referenced. With all honesty, the MVC is often flexible, but often not. There must be leniency or concessions when applicants demonstrate genuine hardship. The policy doesn't leave a lot of room for that. Just want to put that out there clearly.

- Gail Barmakian: Echo Brian. I believe in the theory, but we can't do anything with tunnel vision or in a vacuum. For instance, exclusive reliance on electric supply would have to increase a lot. How realistic is that? Exclusive reliance on one thing is always a danger. The push to electric as the only solution – how does that affect propane, gas, electricians, etc.? We need to go forward with flexibility.  
Example: When you talk about offshore wind, we still don't know what effect large scale offshore wind has on oceans. Yet we are putting in something that may have another destructive effect. Can there also be an analysis of the additional money this will cost for projects? How about going hand in hand with promoting conservation of energy usage.
- Greg Coogan – Huge project here, congrats. We have to have some faith in the elected reps to have that leniency with applicants as they try to put this into effect. We all know we need it's well needed.

Further comments from Chilmark selectman Jim Malkin (12/15/20)

- A large amount of serious work and detailed analysis behind this proposal
- As a policy relying on much state information and standards – rather than being a mandate – it leaves appropriate room in its introductory statement that there is leeway in benefits and detriments evaluation to approve or deny projects that meet or fail to meet some of all of the policy
- the use of the words “target” and “facilitate” are appropriate rather than the word “require”
- Reasonable and appropriate with 5-year review
- The work with outside experts including Eversource engineers on long term planning provides comfort in the analysis
- Question about planning and design principles – is the issue of fire danger in landscaping a town issue and/or not part of this effort?
- I would recommend that the town support this policy

West Tisbury selectmen (12/16/20)

- Skipper Manter: Commendations

- Cindy Mitchell: Supportive. What's next in the process? How do you move toward a final draft?
- Kent Healey: Measuring energy use is a good way to judge projects, but also electricity or fossil fuel use is not the only energy applicants are responsible for. About 1/3 of energy is in the stuff we buy. Glad you are doing this.
- Kate Warner (West Tisbury energy committee): This is a step in the right direction. West Tisbury already passed the 100% renewable warrant article. We are at a sea change. The more we embark on these things, the more people will be used to the idea of all-electric design, and considering climate change more in their decisions. That is important for the survival of MV and the planet. I hope you will give this your support.