

Municipal Plan Approval Checklist

Town: Warren **Date:** 9/13/2011
Reviewer: Clare
Staff / Committee: Staff

The Review: The following is a review of the Warren Town Plan under the provisions and standards of Chapter 117, Section 4350, wherein it is stated “a regional planning commission shall review and approve plans of its member municipalities, when approval is requested and warranted.” Conditions warranting approval include findings that the plan:

- Contains each of the **ten** elements listed in section 4382 of Chapter 117;
- Is consistent with the **thirteen** goals established in Section 4302 of Chapter 117. (“Substantial progress toward attainment” of these goals is the standard by which consistency is evaluated); and
- Is **compatible** with the Regional Plan and the approved plans of other municipalities in the Region.

General Comments/Notes: The Warren Town Plan was adopted in 2005 and approved by CVRPC in that same year. However, that Plan was amended in 2007, without returning to CVRPC for review and approval. Last April CVRPC reviewed the 2007 Warren Town Plan and the Committee recommended that the full Commission approve the 2007 Plan. It was also noted that approval of the Plan would only be valid for the life of the document under review (i.e., until May 24, 2010) and that any future adoption, readoption or amendment must come back before CVRPC for approval if Warren is to retain status as a “confirmed” community. Warren amended the 2007 Plan in 2010 and it was locally re-adopted on 4/29/2011 and submitted to CVRPC on 6/23/2011 for review and approval.

Included with the 2010 Warren Town Plan is the Warren Town Plan Report. Required by Statute the Report outlines the amendments contained within the Plan. Additionally, the Report notes that the Warren Planning Commission is continuing to update the Plan with 2010 Census data and expects to present the latest updated plan “within the next 3 months” (from January 2011). The general changes include: background data and information updated, factual information updated or changed to reflect current conditions and incorporation of the Regional Housing Distribution Plan.

Summary of MUNICIPAL PLAN REQUIREMENTS (under 24 V.S.A., Chapter 117, Subchapter 5)

A Required Plan Elements/Maps [§4382(a)] Each of the elements are required in some form for all municipal plans:			Chp	Comments, notes, suggestions
1. Statement of municipal policies, objectives, programs to guide growth and development	✓		Through out	Each chapter of the Plan concludes with a list of “Goals”, “Objectives”, and “Implementation Strategies” relevant to the topics under consideration, which include those listed above, among others. Many implementation strategies identifying implementation by zoning, strengthening the compatibility between the Plan and zoning.
	TEXT	MAP		
2. Land use plan (and map) showing proposed land use areas/districts	✓	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	10	A detailed land use plan is presented in the text of Chapter 10. Accompanying outdated map doesn’t correspond with updated text. (such as doesn’t depict potential Mixed Use District, Bobbin Mill Commercial or Access Road

				Commercial.)
3. Transportation plan (and map) showing needed/proposed improvements	✓	<input type="checkbox"/>	7	“Getting Around” provides information and analyses on Warren’s transportation system, covering such topics as road networks, access management, traffic calming, the road and highway network, air travel, parking, pedestrian and bicycle circulation and public transit. No specific map for Transportation but the Utilities and facility map includes the road by class and the bridge ratings. Not proposed improvement marked on any maps.
4. Utilities, facilities, services plan (and map) showing present/proposed facilities, including water, sewer, solid waste, libraries, medical facilities, storm water drainage	✓	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	8 & 9	The Plan contains narrative and goals on an array of issues including: municipal government, capital budgeting, emergency services, cultural facilities, health and social services (including day care), recreation, sewer and water facilities, solid waste, communications facilities. Utilities, facilities, services map included. Map shows existing facilities but no proposed facilities. Map doesn’t include the sewer service area and the water service area.
5. Educational facilities plan (and map) ; often included with the utilities/facilities element	✓	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	8	Topics discussed include enrollment trends/projections expenditures, physical infrastructure, and the public library. School and library sites appear on the “Community Facilities” map.
6. Statement of municipal policies on preservation of rare and irreplaceable natural areas, scenic and historic features and resources	✓		3 & 10	Throughout the Plan there are statements on the protection of natural and scenic areas and historical features. Maps of natural resources, slope/topography, agricultural soils, wetlands, deeryards, hydric soils, and other “rural resources” are included but outdated and do not reflect the recent changes to plan (i.e. Bear Habitat changed to Mast Stands and there is newer data for wetlands, and deer yards.)
7. Energy element , including analysis of resources, needs, scarcities, costs, problems, and opportunities for conservation	✓		5	The Plan contains a detail energy section containing a discussion of demand and supply, renewable energy resources, conservation, the land use/energy link, and energy assistance programs. Policies on each of the same are presented here, as well.
8. Housing element , including program for addressing affordable housing needs	✓		6	Chapter offers extensive data and information on Warren’s housing situation, detailing housing trends and characteristics and projecting demand. It also includes a housing affordability analysis, as well as policies and strategies designed to address the needs of the low and moderate income population. Plan also includes a section in response to the Regional Housing Distribution Plan (see page 6)
9. Implementation program for the plan’s objectives	✓		All & 1	Each chapter of the Plan contains an “Implementation Strategies” section for each major goal, designed to help implement the main themes of the document. In addition, Chapter I discusses how the Plan will be applied in municipal decision making, development review, and the Act 250 process.
10. Statement of how plan relates to development trends/plans for adjacent municipalities, areas and	✓		1	Chapter 1 details the Town’s ongoing efforts to cooperate with neighboring towns (particularly those in the MRVPD) and CVRPC.

the region			
11. Economic development element that describes present economic conditions and the location, type, and scale of desired economic development, and identifies policies, projects and programs necessary to foster economic growth. (effective date of July 1, 2012)	✓	9	Although not required by statute, the Plan contains a strong chapter on the local economy. This section examines economic trends, employment, wages and income and the intricacies of the Valley resort/tourism economy. It contains numerous strategies. The section also differentials between the employment opportunities within Warren and how Warren people make a living.

B. Inventories, Studies, Analyses [§4302 (d), 4382(c)]. Include as appropriate to survey existing conditions and probable future trends		Chp	Comments, notes, suggestions
1. Population characteristics and distribution, including income and employment	✓	4	Incorporation of inventories, studies, analyses and surveys are referenced throughout the Plan. The Warren Plan highlights the use of multiple data sources and identifies data gaps or insufficiencies with existing data it also highlights the data gathering efforts of the MRVPD.
2. Existing & projected housing needs by type, amount, loc.	✓	6	
3. Existing and estimated patterns of growth in various land use classifications, and in relation to facilities & services	✓	8,10	
C. Consistency with Broad State Goals [§4302] Plans must show consideration/evidence of a continuing planning process that includes:			Comments, notes, suggestions
1. Coordinated, comprehensive planning process	✓	1	
2. Citizen participation at all levels of the planning process	✓	1	
3. Consideration of use of resources, consequences of growth to region and state	✓	1	
4. Working creatively with other municipalities to develop, implement plans;	✓	1	
D. Consistency with Specific State Goals [§4302] Plans must make substantial progress towards attainment of the following goals: (*or explain why goal is not applicable):			Comments, notes, suggestions
1. Plan development to maintain historic settlement pattern of compact villages surrounded by open countryside, including:	✓		Toward this end, the Plan strongly promotes the health and function of Warren Village and the expansion of the Sugarbush Village/Lincoln Peak local growth center, as well as the protection of rural character in outlying areas.
(i) Encouraging intensive residential development primarily in areas related to community centers and discouraging strip development along highways			
(ii) Encouraging economic growth in growth centers and / or village and urban centers			
(iii) Reinforcing the character and planned growth patterns of public investments, including infrastructure			

Consistency with Specific State Goals (continued from previous page)		Chp	Comments, notes, suggestions
2. Provide a strong and diverse economy	✓	9	
3. Broaden access to educational and vocational training opportunities	✓		The Plan strives to “provide educational programs and facilities that enable every child to become a competent, productive, and responsible citizen.” It seeks to meet this goal through its support for the school system, and attention to enrollment, capacity, infrastructure and growth issues. Plus it identifies vocational opportunities.
4. Provide for safe, convenient, economic, and energy efficient transportation systems	✓	7	The Plan’s excellent and detailed Transportation section highlights current conditions and existing and potential problems.
5. Identify, protect and preserve important natural and historic features of the Vermont landscape, including	✓	3	It calls for “ <i>The maintenance, careful stewardship, preservation and enhancement of Warren’s natural resources and environmental quality for the benefit of future generations.</i> ” Furthermore, it seeks to “ <i>preserve the Town’s rural character, cultural heritage and historic working landscape.</i> ”
(i) Significant natural and fragile areas			
(ii) Outstanding water resources, including lakes, rivers, aquifers, shorelands, and wetlands			
(iii) Significant scenic roads, waterways, and views			
(iv) Important historic structures, sites, or districts, archaeological sites and arch. sensitive areas			
6. Maintain and improve the quality of air, water, wildlife and land resources	✓		See above.
7. Encourage the efficient use of energy and the development of renewable energy resources	✓	5	The Plan’s energy element (Chapter 5) thoroughly addresses the Town’s energy issues and seeks to promote efficiency and conservation through strategies involving land use patterns (growth centers, clustering, etc), transportation alternatives, energy efficiency, and renewable resources.
8. Maintain and enhance recreational opportunities for residents and visitors, including identifying, providing, and protecting public access to noncommercial outdoor recreational opportunities, where applicable	✓	8	The Plan clearly recognizes the importance of recreational opportunity for its own sake, as well as that of the local economy.
9. Encourage and strengthen agricultural and forest industries, including:	✓	3	Includes the objective: to enhance the economic and viability of ag and forestry & maintain an adequate land base for ag and forestry with accompanying strategies.

(i) protection of long-term viability of agricultural and forest lands and maintenance of low overall density			
(ii) encouraging the manufacture and marketing of value-added agricultural and forest products			
(iii) encouraging sound forest and agricultural practices			
(iv) planning public investment so as to minimize development pressure on agriculture and forest land			
10. Provide for the wise and efficient use of natural resources, facilitate the appropriate extraction of earth resources and proper restoration and preservation of aesthetic qualities	✓	3	The Plan does not offer any specific policies on extraction; it does discuss the need for earth resource and catalogues the potential impacts of extraction, concluding that “many of these impacts can be avoided through careful site planning, operation and reclamation.”
11. Ensure the availability of safe and affordable housing, incl:	✓	6	The Plan acknowledges that “ <i>housing affordability is clearly a problem in Warren</i> ” and that “ <i>Warren is aware of the impact of seasonal workers on neighboring towns.</i> ” In response to these issues, the Plan offers numerous goals and strategies designed to help address these issues. Plan also includes a section in response to the Regional Housing Distribution Plan (see page 6)
(i) Encouraging housing to meet the needs of a diversity of social and income groups in the community, particularly for citizens of low and moderate income.			
(ii) Ensuring that new and rehabilitated housing is safe, sanitary, located conveniently to employment and commercial centers, and coordinated with the provision of necessary public facilities and utilities.			
(iii) Identifying sites for multi-family and manufactured housing in locations similar to those generally used for single-family conventional dwellings.			
(iv) Allowing accessory apartments within or attached to single family residences.			
12. Finance and provide an efficient system of public facilities and services to meet future needs, (eg fire, police, EMS, schools, water, sewage, & solid waste)	✓	8	The Warren Plan pledges to “provide an environmentally sound and cost efficient system of community services, facilities, and utilities to meet present and future demands of Warren citizens and visitors”
13. Ensure the availability of safe and affordable child care	✓	8	The Plan contains a detailed section on child care and several strategies intended to promote the availability of quality, affordable services.

E. Compatibility with Municipal, Regional Plans [§4350] Plans must be:		Chp	Comments, notes, suggestions
1. Compatible with other regionally approved town plans	✓	1	Works closely with other MRV Towns.
2. Compatible with the Regional Plan	✓		The Warren Town Plan, as proposed, is unlikely to have an adverse impact on the plans of neighboring towns.

CVRPC Regional Housing Distribution Plan elements	Plan
The Regional Housing Distribution Plan is intended to be used by municipalities when updating their land use plans and regulations; AND Town Plans adopted after January 1, 2009 are expected to incorporate this Housing Distribution Plan onto their town plan housing element.	The Warren Town Plan does address the Housing Distribution Plan within the Housing Chapter (6 “A Place to Live”)
Town Plans shall contain a detailed map or maps of the town showing the town’s preferred locations for future housing units – consistent with current or proposed zoning – for 80% of the anticipated 10 to 15 year housing demand.	While the text of the Housing Distribution Plan clearly describes the location and amount of projected housing within specific areas or zones the map is not as clear. The accompanying map is similar to that included within the approved Williamstown Town Plan.
Town Plans shall also provide mapping updates that identify the locations and number of housing units created in the town since the previous town plan adoption.	The Plan does not include a map illustrating the location of housing units created since the previous town plan adoption.
Towns and cities are required to demonstrate the community’s intent to meet the proposed housing unit numbers laid out in the Housing Distribution Plan or to describe in detail the obstacles that make attainment impossible. CVRPC will consider the planning effort to encourage housing development in relation to the Housing Distribution plan when approving a municipal plan.	The Housing Objectives and implementation strategies within Chp 6 identify how Warren is encouraging future housing in the locations identified.
CVRPC can and will work with municipalities to overcome any local barriers to housing production that prevent attainment of the housing unit numbers and suggest programs of local actions to address those barriers to housing. Towns unwilling to implement programs to address barriers to housing may have their plans denied Regional approval.	n/a

Conclusion: While the maps included within the Plan would greatly benefit from updating to display changes to the text the 4/1/2010 RPC Review remains relevant and in which it states that “The Warren Municipal Plan is an excellent guidance document. It is thorough, well researched and well documented.” The Plan contains the essential elements of a municipal plan and at makes progress towards attainment of the 13 statutory goals. Furthermore, it has satisfied the housing goals Central Vermont Regional Plan as set forth in the Housing Distribution Plan. The Committee therefore recommends that the Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission approve the Warren Municipal Plan.