

CENTRAL VERMONT REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION

Project Review Committee

January 21, 2021 4:00 – 4:45 pm

Remote Participation via GoToMeeting

Minutes

Project Review Committee Members

x	Lee Cattaneo, Orange Commissioner	1
	John Brabant, Calais Commissioner	2
x	Jerry D'Amico, Roxbury Commissioner (Alternate Seat)	3
x	Peter Carbee, Washington Commissioner	4
x	Janet Shatney, Barre City Commissioner	5
x	Robert Wernecke, Berlin Commissioner	6

7
8 Staff: Clare Rock, Zach Maia
9 Guests: George Clain, Barre Town Planning Commissioner and Barre Town CVRPC Alternate; Alex
10 Bravakis, NOVUS; Val and Regen Howard, Barre Town landowners; Chris Violette, Barre Town Planning
11 and Zoning Administrator

12
13 L. Cattaneo calls the meeting to order at 4:00pm.

14
15 **Adjustments to the Agenda**

16
17 G. Clain states he has extensive public comments on matters not on the agenda and is willing to defer
18 until after other agenda items. L. Cattaneo moves public comment to the end of the agenda for this
19 meeting.

20
21 **Public Comments**

22
23 Public Comments moved to the end of the agenda.

24
25 **Act 250 / Section 248 Applications & Projects of Substantial Regional Impact**

26
27 **a) Informational Presentation & Possible Preferred Site Request by Alex Bravakis/NOVUS, Two 500**
28 **KW Solar Installations located at Bridge Street and Allen Street, Barre Town**

29
30 Z. Maia introduces the two projects and provides a brief overview of the applicant's process so far. A.
31 Bravakis is then introduced. A. Bravakis introduces landowners, who have been working with NOVUS to
32 plan for a way to bank land for the next few years. These projects are a way to preserve open space in
33 solar use, rather than converting land to housing development.

34
35 A. Bravakis states that he met with Barre Town Planning Commission twice, Selectboard once, and
36 provided opportunity for a site visit. The Planning Commission has voted to provide a preferred site
37 letter to the Bridge Street project, and has tabled the decision regarding Allen Street until another site

1 visit can be scheduled to discuss screening. A. Bravakis states that NOVUS will not be filing entire
2 petition until preferred site status can be attained by town and RPC.

3
4 A. Bravakis elaborates on the details of the two projects. He states that the Bridge Street project is great
5 spot for solar due to topography, and there is little visual impact. A stream is located nearby, and
6 topography makes farming hard to occur. On the other hand, the Allen street project is more visible, so
7 there may need to be some work in regard to screening.

8
9 Upon the applicant finishing the preliminary overview, L. Cattaneo asks the Project Review Committee
10 members if they have any questions.

11
12 P. Carbee asked about Barre Town Planning Commission's decision the prior night. C. Violette
13 mentioned that Bridge Street location was issued a letter with some stipulations regarding screening.
14 Allen Street just needs more screening and thought, and was tabled until the February Planning
15 Commission meeting. C. Violette thinks the Selectboard will follow suit.

16
17 G. D'Amico asks about preferred site definition. Z. Maia provides a brief background on how preferred
18 sites can be designated, when they are required, and the benefits of receiving this designation.

19
20 P. Carbee asks if these are independent projects, to which A. Bravakis confirms.

21
22 J. Shatney seeks to clarify the Project Review Committee's process and need to make decision. Z. Maia
23 clarifies that this meeting was informational, as the RPC has not received a formal request for preferred
24 site designation from the applicant. J. Shatney then asked about public engagement regarding neighbors
25 at each location. C. Violette states that the Allen Street project did not bring out the public, despite
26 being more visible. The Bridge Street project did have some interest from neighboring landowners.

27
28 R. Wernecke asked Z. Maia about environmental impacts. A. Bravakis states that there are some
29 wetland delineations, but no conflict. Identification of habitat for and presence of Rare, Threatened, or
30 Endangered species will be done in the spring. The PUC's Certificate of Public Good would be dependent
31 on findings in the spring. Z. Maia states that he has not conducted a full staff review but can say that
32 these locations are in the RPC's Rural Future Land Use District.

33
34 A. Bravakis asks a few administrative questions. He is going before the Selectboard during the last week
35 of January, then before the Planning Commission in February. C. Violette clarifies that this is on February
36 17. C. Rock states that the Project Review Committee will meet next on February 25, so his timeline
37 should line up.

38
39 A. Bravakis, V. Howard, R. Howard, and C. Violette leave the meeting.

40
41 L. Cattaneo states that CVRPC should address the issue of storage. Electricity rates are raising, so there
42 needs to be action as more distributed generation facilities are coming through.

43
44 **b) Review Project Review Summary Sheet**

45
46 Z. Maia provides a brief overview of recent permit activity and identifies the Schedule G in Waitsfield
47 proposing the construction of 20 units of residential housing as a possible future review item for the
48 committee.

1
2 **Approve meeting minutes**

3
4 P. Carbee moves to approve the minutes from November 19, 2020, seconded by J. Shatney. All in favor.
5 Motion carries.

6
7 **Public Comment (re-scheduled)**

8
9 G. Clain recognizes his role on local and regional boards, but states that he is representing himself as a
10 CVRPC region resident tonight. He states that Barre Town and CVRPC approved two solar facilities in
11 Barre Town. After reviewing these projects after construction, he is finding that they are not constructed
12 as they were proposed. They are out of the bounds of their original proposal, and he believes that
13 because they have deviated more than 50 feet, the applicant should re-file the notice and CPG.

14
15 J. Shatney notes that few projects get this follow-up. She asks if G. Clain has filed any complaints. G.
16 Clain states that the Town will be filing a letter. This is one of his first steps and advises the RPC to
17 intervene and join the Town in this process.

18
19 G. D'Amico clarifies that CVRPC provided a preferred site letter. G. Clain states that if the construction is
20 different than the plans, preferred site status should be lost. G. D'Amico responds that CVRPC is giving
21 designation to land, not construction, and makes a comparison to local permitting process.

22
23 R. Wernecke adds that if this is a zoning question, zoning requires a certification of construction. This
24 [solar development] is not subject to zoning, but to approval by the PUC. It may be possible for CVRPC to
25 mention in letter that preferred site designation is valid per the plans, with no deviations allowed. G.
26 Clain clarifies that if site deviates 50 ft, PUC rules state the applicant must refile and start over the
27 process.

28
29 G. D'Amico poses the question of evidence. Without a survey, does the RPC have the authority to
30 object? G. Clain recognizes that he hasn't measured with a tape-measure, but there are obvious
31 deviations of hundreds of feet.

32
33 L. Cattaneo states that CVRPC would be concerned from a regional-level. Examples of purview are
34 regional planning areas, environmental constraints, etc. If solar panels get turned around, or things look
35 a bit different as built, CVRPC may not have standing since the regional plan doesn't have site design
36 controls. This may be out of the RPC's purview; but if there were site constraints that might have been
37 violated, then we may get involved.

38
39 P. Carbee agrees with the other committee members, as construction is not within RPC's purview. He
40 states that the PUC looks at engineering so it is their jurisdiction. R. Wernecke acknowledges that
41 without municipal jurisdiction in the process, this is the PUC's role, and it is our role to bring this info to
42 them.

43
44 C. Rock clarifies that CVRPC's role was to provide a preferred site letter, which only let the applicant
45 achieve financial benefits through credit sales. CVRPC can still provide review and comment separately –
46 the preferred site letter is not RPC-support. If the project must be re-filed, the applicant would have to
47 come back through the process with the RPC.

1 G. Clain thanks the Committee and appreciates their understanding and willingness to help him work
2 through the process. J. Shatney asks to be kept informed, and the Committee agrees.

3

4 **Adjournment**

5

6 R. Wernecke moves to adjourn, G. D'Amico seconds. All in favor, motion carries. Meeting adjourned at
7 4:45pm.