

CENTRAL VERMONT REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION
Regional Plan Committee

Draft Minutes

March 5, 2024 4:00 – 5:30 pm

Via Zoom

Committee Members:

x	Alice Peal, Waitsfield Alternate Rep
	Rich Turner, Williamstown Rep
x	Doug Greason, Waterbury Rep
x	Mike Miller, Montpelier Alternate Rep
	John Brabant, Calais Rep

Staff: Christian Meyer (Zoom), Will Pitkin

Adjustment to the Agenda

No adjustments.

Public Comment

No public present. A. Peal spoke on a recent conversation with a member of public related to landslide risk on that person's property.

M. Miller moved to approved Feb 2024 meeting minutes, D. Greason seconded. Approved unanimously.

Discussion – Draft Regional Plan Chapters: Cooperative Planning, Land Use, Economy, Housing

Cooperative Planning chapter feedback: D. Greason called for the chapter to place greater emphasis on flood resilience planning as it is largely a regional-level issue; specifically, he thought it could be a passing reference alongside others as an issue that RPCs will help member municipalities address. M. Miller saw the Cooperative Planning chapter as a place to highlight where the RPCs will act as a bridge between other actors; the chapter need not go into specific detail about individual policies. M. Miller saw room for improvement in goals and strategies, recommending that goals and strategies have action items toward implementation and adhere to the “maintain, evolve, transform” framework of planning. A. Peal asked whether the committee's role is to go through each chapter's goals and strategies and, more broadly, whether CVRPC's role is to be a steward of cooperative planning across the Region and help build capacity in municipal staff and boards.

M. Miller spoke about Montpelier's process for writing the aspirations, goals, and strategies in its municipal plan from vision to action by mapping implementation process. The municipal plan will be published soon and hopefully will be a model for other municipal plans in the Region. M. Miller questioned how to transfer this to the RPC context, where there is less regulatory and implementation authority than in municipal governments, noting that at the RPC level, more initiatives will be programs involving coordination, training, influence, and helping draft municipal bylaws.

D. Greason agreed with M. Miller that the intro sentences in the Cooperative Planning chapter were very helpful and that chapter titles should generally be shortened throughout the regional plan. A. Peal

1 liked tables that clearly show how VT statutes guide each chapter and what the state requirements are
2 on each issue. C. Meyer discussed original intent to include VT statutes in drafts for internal review, but
3 is now considering leaving the VT statutes in the final regional plan. A. Peal suggested leaving higher-
4 level aspirational statements in the early chapters and digging into strategies in more detail in the later
5 chapters and how Waitsfield's municipal documents successfully followed that format.

7 D. Greason spoke about how a brief intro/context could help readers – especially readers reviewing in
8 several years – to understand why the regional plan makes certain decisions, e.g., adopting The Vermont
9 Association of Planning and Development Agencies (VAPDA)'s proposed new land use definitions and
10 why VAPDA proposed those in the first place.

11
12 **Land Use chapter:** D. Greason questioned why planning has trended in recent years toward integrating
13 residential land uses into previously industrial and/or commercial land uses when, previously, the trend
14 was toward blocking residential development in commercial and/or industrial spaces to avoid limiting
15 potential enterprise areas. C. Meyer and W. Pitkin opined that this push could be toward reducing
16 commute times by locating new residential development near employers and services and taking
17 advantage of surplus capacity in existing infrastructure (eg roads and water). A. Peal spoke about
18 Waitsfield's push toward mixed-use infill development instead of strictly residential infill development.
19 M. Miller added that mixed-use development can help weather economic booms and busts better than
20 single-use commercial or industrial zoning districts. D. Greason asked how closely CVRPC's proposed
21 land use categories adhered to VAPDA's proposed categories: C. Meyer said quite closely, with the only
22 exception being established residential zones that are already developed and serviced by infrastructure
23 but do not have significant capacity for further expansion (per M. Miller's suggestion in February 6, 2024
24 Regional Plan Committee meeting).

25
26 M. Miller and D. Greason spoke about the different tools in RPCs' toolbox, and discussed whether
27 aspirations, goals, and strategies for each chapter can be reduced to a vision of the RPC's aspiration then
28 essentially copy and paste "education, coordination, and technical assistance". A. Peal asked whether
29 the VAPDA report referenced in the Land Use chapter has been published yet – C. Meyer stated that the
30 VAPDA report has, and the land use definitions that it proposes very closely align with the CVRPC's
31 proposed definitions in the draft regional plan update.

32
33 C. Meyer spoke about the timetable for draft regional plan review, the possibility of a deadline
34 extension from The Vermont Agency of Commerce and Community Development (ACCD), and
35 committee availability for a potential special meeting to review more draft chapters in the upcoming
36 weeks. A. Peal, D. Greason, and M. Miller stated that they were generally available but had doubts
37 about the speed that the review process was advancing.

38
39 **Economy chapter:** A. Peal wanted to add a reference to CVRPC's support of the Winooski River Tactical
40 Basin Plan and D. Greason wanted to add a reference to internet in either the Economy or Infrastructure
41 chapters, A. Peal wanted to add a statement on what the Central Vermont Economic Development
42 Corporation (CVEDC) does. M. Miller expressed surprise that the West Central Vermont Comprehensive
43 Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) did not reference housing and noted that economic
44 considerations in planning go beyond businesses and include workers' needs, such as housing,
45 healthcare, and transportation.

46
47 **Housing chapter:** D. Greason questioned whether 5% target vacancy rate is the correct figure, since
48 other sources he has seen recently stated other figures. D. Greason also wanted to increase emphasis on

1 mental health and substance use treatment in discussion of homelessness. A. Peal and D. Greason
2 wanted a more nuanced analysis of the housing situation, discussed ways to strengthen analysis and
3 have it better reflect the reality that Central Vermonters are experiencing.
4

5 *D. Greason moved to adjourn, M. Miller seconded, all in favor, motion carried.*