

CENTRAL VERMONT REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION

Regional Plan Committee

Draft Minutes

October 15, 2024 4:00 – 5:30 pm

29 Main Street, Suite 4, Montpelier, VT 05602

Remote Access Via Zoom

Committee Members:

X	Alice Peal, Waitsfield Alternate Rep
	Alice Farrell, Barre Town Rep
X	Doug Greason, Waterbury Rep
X	Mike Miller, Montpelier Alternate Rep
X	John Brabant, Calais Rep

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1 Staff: Christian Meyer, Brian Voigt, Will Pitkin, Eli Toohey, Niki Sabado, Pamela Sonn (in person)
2 Zoe Christiansen – East Montpelier Rep, Lee Cattaneo – Orange Rep, Bob Blodgett – Moretown Planning
3 Commission member

5 **Adjustment to the Agenda**

6 No adjustments.

8 **Public Comment**

9 No public comment.

11 **Approval of Minutes**

12 M. Miller moved to accept September 2024 draft meeting minutes, D. Greason seconded. All in favor,
13 motion carried.

15 **Discussion**

17 Act 181 Presentation

18 Staff presented on recent reforms to Act 250 and the State Community Investment Program (formerly
19 known as the State Designation Program). Topics included how current designated areas inform interim
20 Act 250 exemptions and the Regional Plan Future Land Use Map (FLU Map), then how the FLU Map
21 informs long-term Act 250 exemptions and the reformed designation program. Long-term Act 250
22 exemptions will use a tier-based system to determine Act 250 jurisdiction; the FLU Map land use
23 categories will determine areas' eligibility for tiers that receive Act 250 exemptions.

24
25 VAPDA established 10 land use categories that will now be standard across all Regional Plans' FLU Maps
26 statewide; VAPDA is still developing the methods by which FLU Maps define which areas fall under each
27 land use category.

28
29 The Land Use Review Board (LURB – currently known as the Natural Resources Board) will need to
30 approve the FLU Maps and possibly the entire Regional Plan. J. Brabant asked how much influence the
31 LURB will have in reviewing Regional Plans, whether there will be an appeals process if the LURB rejects

1 the Regional Plan and/or FLU Map, whether the LURB review will be just a yes or no determination or if
2 the LURB will supply corrections to rejected Regional Plans and/or FLU Maps. Discussion followed; staff
3 noted that many of the new rules are still being made over the next several years. Staff then highlighted
4 several ongoing questions and potential conflicts that Act 181 introduces.

5
6 A. Peal asked what Act 181 means for municipalities and how it might change municipalities' actions. A.
7 Peal also noted potential conflicts between the Act 250 exemptions and flood risk mitigation. M. Miller
8 noted that municipal regulations may ensure that development in floodplains can be done properly in a
9 way that does not increase flood risk and highlighted recent proposed developments in Montpelier that
10 have been delayed by Act 250 review. J. Brabant noted the benefits of Act 250 for areas downstream of
11 those that would be exempt.

12
13 W. Pitkin spoke about Act 121, The Flood Safety Act, and how that will shift river corridor and floodplain
14 regulation to the State, which may reduce the potential flood risk impacts of exempting areas from Act
15 250 review. He noted a loophole in which priority housing projects are exempt from Act 250 review
16 even in river corridors and floodplains. M. Miller is a member of the senate committee that will develop
17 the rules for statewide river corridor and floodplain regulation and will report back to the committee on
18 future updates.

19
20 A. Peal expressed concern that Act 181 and the statewide conversation about Act 250 review does not
21 sufficiently account for increased risk of flooding and other hazards due to climate change.

22
23 C. Meyer asked what the next steps were related to Act 181's reforms for the committee and for staff.

24
25 Z. Christiansen spoke about the high cost of developing new housing and questioned the value of
26 housing that is not affordable. She suggested other avenues of increasing housing stock, including
27 restricting short-term rentals and reoccupying existing vacant housing.

28
29 A. Peal and Z. Christiansen referenced the importance of certain populations, including homeless and
30 low-income, being housed closed to services.

31
32 M. Miller spoke about the challenges municipal officials have in developing municipal plans and
33 regulations to conform to the new rules, especially with so many details still to be determined. He
34 stated that Regional Planning Commissions can provide value through municipal technical assistance
35 that helps ensure municipal conformance with new requirements.

36
37 Z. Christiansen and C. Meyer spoke about additional needs and constraints for affordable housing
38 development, including sidewalks and public transit.

39
40 C. Meyer and N. Sabado provided further information on the timeline of the Regional Plan, specifically
41 the Land Use draft chapter. Outside factors include VAPDA's development of the methods to define the
42 land use categories in the FLU Map.

43
44 D. Greason stated that a key area will be where the Regional Plan's Land Use chapter goes beyond or

1 differs from simply meeting statutory requirements.

2

3 Draft Housing Chapter

4 Discussion began with written feedback that A. Peal previously provided. E. Toohey spoke about the
5 statewide and countywide housing targets in the VT Housing Needs Assessment that the VT Housing
6 Finance Authority and the VT Agency of Commerce and Community Development just published. E.
7 Toohey addressed factors that CVRPC is using to disaggregate countywide targets into municipal targets
8 for each member municipality.

9

10 Discussion included availability of housing data and gaps in that data, including in seasonal/second
11 homes and short-term rentals, and possible ways to gather more data to fill those gaps. Some towns in
12 VT, including Warren, have hired consultants to gather this data.

13

14 E. Toohey spoke about factors that CVRPC is considering using in its formula to disaggregate countywide
15 housing targets to the municipal level. Factors under consideration include school capacity, grocery
16 stores, access to healthcare, roads, public transit, water and wastewater infrastructure. Discussion
17 included affordable housing and how different demographics have different needs for housing locations.
18 J. Brabant spoke about what value Act 250 review has added to communities where previous housing
19 developments were sited and how areas that will be exempt from Act 250 review can ensure that
20 municipal review maintains those benefits.

21

22 M. Miller liked the housing continuum and suggested that affordable housing be restated as “subsidized
23 housing” and requested that the housing continuum include the additional category of congregate
24 housing, which may include dormitory-style housing or shared living situations.

25

26 Z. Christiansen began a discussion about the “build it and they will come” mentality in housing
27 development and the extent to which new housing development will translate into increased
28 permanent housing stock when short-term rentals are often more profitable. A Peal questioned the
29 future economic prospects of short-term rentals in relation to climate change, as ski areas see less snow
30 in the future. Discussion touched on the economic and impact of short-term rentals, possible short-term
31 rental regulation, and what CVRPC can do to encourage increased regulation at the state and municipal
32 levels.

33

34 A. Peal requested that previous written feedback on the Housing draft chapter be distributed to the
35 entire committee.

36

37 A. Peal moved to adjourn, J. Brabant seconded, all in favor, motion carried.