

CENTRAL VERMONT REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION

Regional Plan Committee

Draft Minutes

November 19, 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
X	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: Sam Lash, Christian Meyer, Will Pitkin, Niki Sabado (in person)

2 Zoe Christiansen – East Montpelier Rep, James Crafts – Warren Planning Commission member

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4 **Adjustment to the Agenda**

5 A. Peal adjusted agenda to add staff follow-up on committee members' questions from October 2024
6 meeting regarding reforms introduced in Act 181. W. Pitkin said that Act 181 states that if the Land Use
7 Review Board (LRB – currently known as the Natural Resources Board) rejects a Regional Plan and/or the
8 Future Land Use Map contained therein, the LRB can suggest modifications. Act 181 did not state an
9 appeals procedure for if the LRB rejects a Regional Plan and/or Future Land Use Map and C. Baker,
10 executive director of the Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission, stated that there was no
11 appeals procedure before any courts. Committee members discussed whether it was legally permissible
12 for there to be no appeals procedure. M. Miller noted that the ability to appeal decisions by state
13 boards hinges on whether the board is quasi-judicial (quasi-judicial boards' decisions are appealable but
14 other boards' decisions are not); recently, Montpelier was unable to appeal the Community Investment
15 Board's decision to reject the city's application for a Growth Center designation.

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17 **Public Comment**

18 No public comment.

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20 **Approval of Minutes**

21 Committee did not approve October draft meeting minutes and stated an intent to review them in the
22 December meeting.

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24 **Discussion**

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26 Meeting began at 4:02pm.

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28 Staff presented results of follow-up research on committee members' Act 181-related questions and
29 discussion followed, as detailed above.

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31 Draft Energy Chapter

32 Discussion began with committee members' feedback on draft chapter. A. Peal reiterated a desire for a

1 readable document that is accessible to layperson readers.

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3 D. Greason echoed a desire for readability, plus consistency between different chapters in formatting,
4 tone, and approach. D. Greason liked the Energy chapter from the 2016 Regional Plan as amended 2020
5 that had a brief executive summary/intro to the issues followed by the full, in-depth energy plan at the
6 end of the regional plan. D. Greason expressed a preference for the Energy element of the upcoming
7 regional plan to be structured similarly. D. Greason also wanted a more transparent process for what
8 changes staff have made from the previous regional plan to the upcoming one and between different
9 drafts of the upcoming plan, including Track Changes.

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11 J. Brabant repeated prior concerns about building a regional plan from scratch instead of updating the
12 previous plan. J. Brabant also wanted a clearer indication of what changes have been made from plan to
13 plan and between drafts of the upcoming plan and expressed concern about the lack of commissioner
14 involvement in the writing. J. Brabant suggested returning to the 2016 Regional Plan as amended 2020
15 then adding in new content from current draft chapter with commissioner involvement.

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17 A. Farrell wanted the chapters to have clear links between each other and not become siloed. A. Farrell
18 stated that her primary concern was that the regional plan be interrelated between chapters, easy to
19 read, and make sense to readers as a contiguous document.

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21 M. Miller agreed with D. Greason's preference for a shorter Energy chapter that may be distinct from
22 the more in-depth Energy Plan. M. Miller stated that the Energy draft chapter was moving in the right
23 direction relative to previous drafts, though he had not reviewed the previous regional plan.

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25 A. Peal stated that she saw redundancy between the draft Energy chapter and outside documents, such
26 as the State Climate Action Plan, and suggested enhancing readability by including references to outside
27 documents with abbreviated or no summaries of those documents. A. Peal wanted the Energy chapter
28 to be a document that she could bring to municipal officials that briefly states what relevant state
29 regulations are and what towns and interested individuals can do to help meet requirements/goals.

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31 Z. Christiansen requested that the regional plan include more discussion on the interconnectedness of
32 chapters.

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34 D. Greason reiterated his opinion that the 2016 Regional Plan as amended 2020 had an excellent
35 executive summary.

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37 C. Meyer provided background on the regional plan writing process, including that staff were originally
38 directed in 2019 to do a full rewrite of the regional plan. A. Peal noted that the previous regional plan
39 had details on the planning and writing process, including a steering committee, and asked what the
40 writing process was for the current draft.

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42 S. Lash noted that she had tried several times to reform the energy steering committee throughout the
43 years but did not receive approval to reform that committee, in part due to CVRPC's staffing shortage in
44 prior years. S. Lash provided regular trainings, webinars, publications, and direct outreach to
45 municipalities and other interested parties, including utilities.

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S. Lash reiterated that when she began work on the draft Energy chapter, she was instructed to merge into one section the briefer Energy Element with the more in-depth Enhanced Energy Plan, which were discrete sections in the 2016 Regional Plan as amended 2020.

D. Greason reiterated his request for a before and after document with Track Changes. A. Peal wanted a shift away from state and developer focus toward a focus on municipal actions. S. Lash stated that she has been highlighting actions that CVRPC municipalities have taken and asked the committee how she can continue to bring municipalities' actions to the forefront of the chapter.

A. Peal asked who the main audience was for the chapter. S. Lash stated that the audience was originally the statutory requirements plus the Public Service Department and other technical stakeholders and municipal energy committees. Many sections, including municipal targets and explanations of data limitations, are directed at municipal energy committees.

A. Peal posed the questions of what would be most helpful for staff from the committee and vice versa.

Discussion followed regarding the legibility of comparing different versions of the Energy chapter with Track Changes.

S. Lash discussed energy project siting constraints and a project review procedure that she is developing. J. Brabant discussed scales of renewable energy generation projects and expressed his desire that the plan be an aid to member municipalities, not a threat to them. J. Brabant reiterated his desire that the Energy chapter include the previous regional plan's restriction on wind turbine hub height and background on how that restriction was developed, then discussed the potential regional impacts of renewable energy developments. J. Brabant requested that staff highlight the goals and strategies and constraints that the draft Energy chapter has and compare them to those in the previous regional plan.

S. Lash summarized the process for putting together the draft Energy chapter's energy project constraints and desired characteristics and how those related to statutory requirements and other chapters in the regional plan. Discussion followed regarding constraints and energy project development.

A. Peal asked how the committee can best help move the chapter forward. C. Meyer suggested that commissioners bring draft chapters to their towns for review. A. Peal, D. Greason, and J. Brabant offered to work with S. Lash on the draft chapter outside of meetings.

Committee members asked which draft chapters are ready to share with their towns. Staff suggested the chapters that have already been reviewed by the Regional Plan Committee and the Board of Commissioners – Natural Systems, Economy, and Transportation – be shared; the committee requested that the chapters have consistent formatting. Staff will incorporate all suggested edits from those three chapters and make formatting consistent then distribute to the committee. S. Lash recommended that staff and committee prepare specific questions from readers before distributing to the towns.

1 J. Brabant requested that chapter drafts be sent to the committee in Word doc format so that
2 committee members can see edits in Track Changes and suggest additional edits in comments.

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4 S. Lash requested clarification on how the committee wanted to provide input before the next meeting.

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6 S. Lash asked if the committee wanted to provide written answers to the questions in the meeting
7 packet that were not covered in the meeting; committee members said yes. S. Lash provided a summary
8 of several of the key questions, including questions related to energy efficiency measures which are new
9 to this draft and not featured heavily in the previous regional plan.

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11 Committee decided to postpone approval of the October draft meeting minutes until the December
12 meeting.

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14 A. Peal adjourned meeting.

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16 Minutes taken by W. Pitkin