

CENTRAL VERMONT REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION

Project Review Committee

December 3, 2024 4:00pm

Remote Participation via Zoom

Draft Minutes

Project Review Committee Members

X	Lee Cattaneo, Orange Commissioner
X	John Brabant, Calais Commissioner
X	Bill Arrand, Worcester Commissioner
X	Peter Carbee, Washington Commissioner
X	Robert Wernecke, Berlin Commissioner
X	Alice Peal, Waitsfield Alternate Commissioner

1 Staff: Sam Lash, Will Pitkin (in person)

2 Public: Sheila Duranleau, Jennifer Nissi, Nicholas Bresette, Martha Staskus, Geoff Martin

3

4 L. Cattaneo called the meeting to order at 4:00pm.

5

6 **Public comment**

7 None

8

9 **Adjustments to the Agenda**

10 None

11

12 **Approval of Minutes**

13 R. Wernecke moved to approve the July 25, 2024 meeting's draft minutes, P. Carbee seconded, all in
14 favor, motion carried.

15

16 **Summary of Updates to Public Utility Commission Rules**

17

18 S. Lash explained recent updates of VT Public Utility Commission (PUC) rules, focusing on the changes
19 that most directly impact the committee. The rule changes also include changes to the state's renewable
20 energy generation targets, which will likely lead to an increase in medium- and large-scale renewable
21 energy projects in the region. Another change was that net-metering projects require the energy to be
22 used on the parcel where it was generated or directly adjacent parcels, which may negatively impact
23 development of new projects that use virtual net-metering, including community solar projects; the PUC
24 is working on a report on how to mitigate impacts of this new rule on community energy generation
25 projects. S. Lash clarified that such projects still may be developed but, under the new rule, are not
26 eligible for the financial benefits of net-metering. Committee members clarified impacts on potential or
27 existing municipal projects in their municipalities.

28

29 Another new rule is that net-metering generation projects must now request preferred site letters of
30 support after the conclusion of the 45-day advance notice period. This rule change is why this meeting's
31 agenda includes a second request for a preferred site letter of support for the Comstock Road solar

1 project – for which the committee already provided a preferred site letter of support in January 2024
2 prior to the 45-day advance notice filing.

3
4 Other new rules relate to interconnection requirements for renewable energy generation projects and
5 requirements for notifying neighboring landowners. S. Lash highlighted that the new notification rules
6 would likely place a greater burden on municipal officials, since developers now need to confirm lists
7 that are produced through online resources such as the VT Center for Geographic Information’s online
8 parcel viewer.

9
10 **Proposed Internal Section 248/248a Review Procedures**

11
12 S. Lash begun summary of proposed Section 248 review procedure with a summary of required and
13 optional roles for CVRPC and the Project Review Committee in Section 248 proceedings. S. Lash
14 suggested that the committee revisit the definition of Substantial Regional Impact at a future meeting. J.
15 Brabant stated that, in the past, the committee has invited representatives of utilities to meetings when
16 determining whether projects would have Substantial Regional Impact and suggested that the
17 committee do so moving forward. S. Lash noted that the PUC’s new interconnection rules give utilities a
18 greater role in determining whether projects will negatively impact transmission infrastructure and
19 earlier in the application process the utilities will have a greater say in whether those projects can move
20 forward.

21
22 S. Lash provided more details of proposed Section 248 review procedure including roles of the
23 committee, staff, and full Board of Commissioners; CVRPC’s interactions with outside entities, such as
24 applicants and the PUC; and internal workflow for staff. She introduced the rubric that included
25 constraints and preferred site characteristics.

26
27 L. Cattaneo requested clarification between the review process for preferred site letters of request and
28 general petitions for Certificates of Public Good. S. Lash stated that the review process was very similar;
29 however, the committee will know at the beginning of the review process whether the developer is
30 seeking a preferred site letter of support from CVRPC or whether CVRPC is just reviewing the application
31 to determine whether the project has Substantial Regional Impact and if the committee chooses to
32 provide optional comments or other optional interventions.

33
34 S. Lash defined known and possible constraints and explained the origins of state, regional, and local
35 constraints.

36
37 W. Pitkin summarized the proposed Section 248a review procedure, which is very similar to the
38 proposed Section 248 review procedure, with minor changes such as removing language related to
39 preferred site letters of support (which are not relevant to Section 248a applications) and changing 45-
40 day advance notice to 60-day advance notice.

41
42 S. Duranleau asked how to determine whether projects are located in constraints. S. Lash stated that for
43 state constraints, staff consult online mapping resources developed by the State of Vermont, including
44 the Act 174 – Energy Planning layer in the VT Department of Housing and Community Development’s
45 Planning Atlas and the VT Agency of Natural Resources’ Natural Resources Atlas.

46
47 **Review of Proposed Telecommunications Project (Section 248a)**

1
2 W. Pitkin summarized project and site characteristics for the proposed telecommunications tower in
3 Washington, VT and showed the new constraints and preferred site types rubric in action.
4

5 J. Brabant expressed concern with the project's siting in a groundwater source protection area,
6 especially since it includes a diesel-fueled backup generator with onsite diesel fuel storage.
7

8 Discussion ensued regarding schedule of advance submission filing, input from CVRPC, the public
9 hearing with the applicant and the Town of Washington, and applicant's stated intent to file the full
10 petition.
11

12 N. Bresette commented on his concerns with the proposed project, including aesthetic concerns from
13 Washington's historic village, siting in a groundwater source protection area, past Verizon cellular
14 network coverage in Washington until approximately five years ago, and the potential for the applicant
15 to colocate the proposed antennae on existing tower(s).
16

17 J. Brabant provided a history of the Section 248a permitting process and legal requirements for telecom
18 infrastructure development prior to its existence.
19

20 Discussion followed regarding procedure for further review by CVRPC and other entities of concerns
21 raised during the meeting and deadline for CVRPC to submit input, plus whom to address any input to.
22 Discussion also included CVRPC's internal procedure regarding whether the committee can submit input
23 without receiving approval from the full Board of Commissioners.
24

25 J. Brabant moved that the committee send the CVRPC Board of Commissioners a letter summarizing the
26 committee's concerns with the project and CC the applicant and PUC, P. Carbee seconded, all in favor,
27 motion carried.
28

29 **Review of Proposed Solar Projects (Section 248)** 30

31 S. Lash summarized the Comstock Road solar project and the PUC rule changes that required the
32 applicant to request another preferred site letter of support. J. Brabant moved to issue a new preferred
33 site letter of support, P. Carbee seconded, all in favor, motion carried.
34

35 S. Lash provided updates on the Berlin Williams solar project since it is a relatively large project; no
36 action required. M. Staskus also summarized the project from the applicant's perspective. M. Staskus
37 additionally provided her advice on how to most productively interact with the applicant for the
38 proposed Washington cell tower.
39

40 **Adjournment** 41

42 *P. Carbee moved to adjourn, A. Peal seconded, all in favor, motion carried.*
43

44 The committee discussed the schedule for the next meeting and tentatively decided to return to the
45 normal schedule of the fourth Thursday of the month, which is January 23, 2025. Committee and staff
46 discussed the committee's rules of process and rules of procedure.
47

48 *Minutes taken by W. Pitkin.*