

CENTRAL VERMONT REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION

Project Review Committee

January 30, 2025 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 Commissioners: Doug Greason

3 Public: Bob Atchison

4

5 L. Cattaneo called the meeting to order at 4:03pm.

6

7 **Public comment**

8 None

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10 **Adjustments to the Agenda**

11 None

12

13 **Approval of Minutes**

14 J. Brabant moved to approve the December 3, 2024 meeting's draft minutes, R. Wernecke seconded, all
15 in favor, motion carried.

16

17 **Committee's Authority and Responsibilities in Act 250, Section 248, and Section 248a Applications**

18

19 W. Pitkin spoke about when CVRPC is required to comment on Act 250 applications (major applications)
20 and on Section 248 applications (applications with hearings and when applicants request preferred site
21 letters of support from CVRPC), as specified in CVRPC's annual contract and work plan with ACCD.

22

23 The discussion then turned to when CVRPC has chosen to participate in Act 250, Section 248, and
24 Section 248a hearings and the role that Substantial Regional Impact ("SRI") has played in determining
25 whether or not to participate in these applications – essentially, if an application is determined to have
26 SRI, then the Project Review Committee has discussed the application and considered whether or not to
27 comment or otherwise intervene in the permitting process before the District Environmental
28 Commission or Public Utility Commission.

29

30 **Substantial Regional Impact Definition**

31

1 CVPRC is required by statute to define Substantial Regional Impact but can choose its own definition.
2 Staff presented the currently adopted definition and an overview of how other RPCs have defined SRI.

3
4 Then, staff presented the SRI guidelines that the Project Review Committee developed in 2018 and
5 approved with the intent of bringing before the full Board of Commissioners for adoption, but this effort
6 to redefine SRI fell through the cracks and the 2018 guidelines were never adopted. (NB: the 2018 SRI
7 definition was referred to as guidelines in order to not exclude projects that the committee felt merited
8 review but did not fall within the suggested parameters.)

9
10 R. Wernecke, who was on the Project Review Committee in 2018, spoke on the history of efforts to
11 develop the 2018 SRI guidelines and how the committee at the time chose specific thresholds.

12
13 W. Pitkin and S. Lash then presented feedback and suggested edits to date from staff on the 2018 SRI
14 guidelines and the committee discussed the provided further suggested edits. Staff will incorporate this
15 feedback, along with any additional feedback from the committee and other staff in the coming weeks
16 and present draft SRI guidelines for committee review and hopefully approval at the February meeting.

17
18 Committee discussion on the 2018 SRI guidelines and proposed edits included topics such as the
19 threshold for reviewing energy generation projects; the desired level of specificity in definitions related
20 to, for example, critical natural resources; and how to reference other development constraints and
21 enabling factors, for example, known and possible state constraints.

22
23 J. Brabant noted that SRI is important for guiding CVRPC's participation in projects that will have SRI that
24 is positive, not just negative SRI.

25
26 The committee agreed to review the draft guidelines incorporating their and staff's feedback at the
27 February meeting.

28
29 **Updates on Recent Section 248 and Section 248a Applications**

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31 W. Pitkin presented updates on two recent Section 248a applications for cell towers in the region – one
32 for which the developer recently met with residents of Marshfield and one for which the developer is
33 scheduled to meet with residents of Washington in February. Since both applications are still in the
34 Advance Notice phase, there is no action that the committee can take with the Public Utility Commission
35 at this time. Discussion included topics such as aesthetic impacts, potential for co-location of antennae
36 on existing towers, and whether the proposed site of the Washington tower in a groundwater source
37 protection area is in conformance with the regional plan/whether mitigation measures can be taken to
38 reduce potential groundwater contamination (e.g. using a propane-fueled backup generator instead of
39 diesel-fueled).

40
41 S. Lash and W. Pitkin then presented on two Section 248 applications that have hearings scheduled (one
42 of which had the hearing noticed after the meeting packet was distributed). One application, a proposed
43 solar development in Berlin, had already gone through the first round of discovery in the hearing, and
44 the questions to date appeared to be related to technical details/inconsistencies in the application. The

1 second application, proposed upgrades to electric transmission line upgrades in Waterbury, had not had
2 any questions to date and staff were not yet able to discern why the application had gone to hearing.

3
4 Because these two Section 248 applications are going to hearing, CVRPC is required to comment, and
5 staff will prepare more in-depth analyses of the applications' conformance with the regional plan and
6 draft comments to the PUC for discussion at the February meeting.

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8 **Adjournment**

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10 *R. Wernecke moved to adjourn, J. Brabant seconded, all in favor, motion carried.*

11
12 *Minutes taken by W. Pitkin.*

DRAFT