

CENTRAL VERMONT REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION

Regional Plan Committee

Draft Minutes

February 4, 2025 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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Staff: Sam Lash, Will Pitkin (remote), Christian Meyer, Brian Voigt (in person)

A Peal Called the meeting to order at 4:03PM

Adjustments to the Agenda

No adjustments to the agenda.

Public Comment

No public comment.

Decision on Length of Meeting

A. Peal discussed the possibility of officially extending meeting length to two hours, at least until a complete draft of the Regional Plan is submitted to the Land Use Review Board, in light of recent committee meetings extending past the scheduled 90 minutes to approximately 120 minutes. Committee members expressed a general preference for keeping meetings scheduled for 90 minutes and extending individual meetings as needed if important discussions run over.

NB: CVRPC's office lost power at approximately 4:10pm, disconnecting C. Meyer and B. Voigt; C. Meyer would later rejoin the meeting remotely from home.

Approval of Minutes

M. Miller moved to approve October 2024, December 2024, and January 2025 meeting minutes; J. Brabant seconded; all in favor; motion carried.

Committee members also requested that meeting minutes include more clarity and details on decisions that the committee reaches.

Community Outreach Survey

A. Peal tabled the discussion on the community outreach survey since B. Voigt was planning to lead this discussion and was not able to attend due to electrical issues at CVRPC's office earlier in the meeting.

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2 **Energy Chapter Decision Points Discussion – Renewable Energy Generation Targets**
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4 S. Lash and the committee discussed the potential role of hydroelectric dams in contributing to Central
5 Vermont’s renewable energy generation portfolio, including existing hydroelectric dams, opposition to
6 new hydroelectric dams due to environmental concerns, and advances in hydroelectric generation
7 technology and the possible role those new technologies may play in future generation.
8

9 J. Brabant addressed technological advances in other renewable sources, such as solar and wind, then
10 requested that the Regional Plan include a discussion of technological advances on the horizon for all
11 new renewable energy sources and be worded to give flexibility for future Regional Plan updates to
12 incorporate new technologies as they are invented and/or advanced to the point where they can be
13 feasibly implemented in the region. S. Lash assured the committee that the draft chapter includes such
14 language and will continue to highlight technological advances in renewable energy generation moving
15 forward.
16

17 S. Lash returned the conversation to a continuation of the previous meeting’s discussion of potential
18 renewable energy generation scenarios that would allow Central Vermont to reach its required
19 generation targets. She reiterated various pros and cons of the different alternative scenarios that were
20 presented in the meeting packet and requested the committee’s preferences between the different
21 alternatives.
22

23 M. Miller expressed concern that the renewable energy generation targets could later be used to
24 oppose worthy generation projects in the future if, for example, the region meets targets for a specific
25 source and another project for that source is proposed, opponents could use the region already having
26 met the target as a reason to oppose the project. S. Lash assured that the Regional Plan would include
27 language to mitigate this possibility and reminded the committee that the plan can be updated (and is
28 required to be updated periodically).
29

30 S. Lash asked the committee’s preferences on the proposed renewable energy generation source mix
31 scenarios. D. Greason preferred Scenario 3. J. Brabant preferred Scenario 3 but with a caveat that it is
32 based on current technology and may shift based on new technologies. C. Meyer proposed that re-
33 creating an Energy Committee may be an effective way to keep CVRPC’s energy priorities up to date
34 with emerging technologies.
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36 **Energy Chapter Decision Points Discussion – Siting**
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38 S. Lash and the committee discussed the proposed layers, including Vermont state-standard known and
39 possible constraints, optional Central Vermont-specific regional constraints, and other preferred
40 characteristics. Discussion centered on specifics of conserved land, municipal-owned land, proximity to
41 existing and planned development, proximity to three-phase electrical transmission lines.
42

43 The committee agreed to clarify that municipal lands should not be categorically excluded as a siting
44 constraint but, instead, municipal land exclusions should follow municipal priorities and specific sites’
45 uses.
46

47 M. Miller questioned how to best balance the desire to locate energy generation near demand centers
48 without occupying land that would be ideal for housing development (another regional and state

1 priority), especially when factoring in important and expensive infrastructure such as municipal water
2 and wastewater service. The committee agreed to include language in the Regional Plan that would
3 constrain land-intensive renewable energy generation in areas with infrastructure that would support
4 housing while still encouraging siting in areas with infrastructure that would support energy generation,
5 storage, and transmission.

6
7 C. Meyer also suggested that the Regional Plan differentiate siting constraints based on scale of the
8 projects (both generation capacity and physical footprint) and S. Lash provided background on common
9 differentiation points in energy planning (15kW, 150kW, 500kW).

10
11 The committee revisited the question of defining Substantial Regional Impact and whether 150kW or
12 500kW should be the default threshold for energy generation projects – and noted that the proposed
13 definition did include phasing to account for cumulative impacts of multi-phase projects. S. Lash will
14 bring a map of all areas in the region that could support projects over 500kW to a future meeting and, if
15 time allows, potentially another map that shows areas that could support projects over 150kW, then the
16 committee will use these maps to reach a final decision on the Substantial Regional Impact threshold.

17
18 W. Pitkin humbly requested that the committee reach clear decisions through a vote or at least spoken
19 consensus, per the committee’s earlier request for meeting minutes to clearly reflect decisions.

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21 **Upcoming Meeting Topics**

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23 A. Peal proposed an agenda for the next few meetings. The next meeting would include a discussion of
24 the Substantial Regional Impact definition, plus possibly another topic. The following meeting would
25 begin discussing the Land Use chapter and draft Future Land Use Area Map. The committee still needs to
26 discuss the community outreach survey due to technical difficulties at this meeting, so the committee
27 will plan to discuss that survey at the next meeting.

28
29 J. Brabant moved to adjourn, M. Miller seconded, all in favor.

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31 A. Peal adjourned meeting at 5:47 PM

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33 *Respectfully submitted by W. Pitkin*