

CENTRAL VERMONT REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION

Project Review Committee

September 25, 2025, 4:00 pm

Remote Participation via Zoom

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
	Robert Wernecke, Berlin Commissioner
x	Alice Peal, Waitsfield Alternate Commissioner

1 Staff: Lorraine Banbury, Sam Lash, Christian Meyer, Keith Cubbon

2 Public: Stephen Whitaker (Montpelier)

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4 L. Cattaneo called the meeting to order at 4:05 pm. A quorum was confirmed with three members
5 present at the outset (L. Cattaneo, J. Brabant, A. Peal), and later B. Arrand joined.

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7 Adjustments to the Agenda

8 None

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10 Public comment

11 Stephen Whitaker of Montpelier provided detailed public comment. He informed the committee that
12 Montpelier City Council had voted the previous night to approve a \$7 million Country Club Road upgrade
13 project to raise a section of U.S. Route 2 by nearly three feet between the railroad crossing and beyond
14 the rotary, then lowering it again further down. He emphasized the transportation impacts, citing
15 concerns raised during Montpelier's city plan review by East Montpelier representatives about rotary
16 congestion and Gallison Hill traffic. He suggested the project merited scrutiny and possible review by the
17 PRC, given its dependence on CDBG-DR and other funding sources.

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19 Discussion followed on whether and how the committee could engage with issues not on the posted
20 agenda. L. Cattaneo asserted that items must be on the agenda for discussion. J. Brabant disagreed,
21 stating that under Robert's Rules public comment can be responded to and discussed briefly, provided
22 no action is taken. A. Peal attempted to ask clarifying questions about the road project but agreed to
23 defer the conversation. Staff recommended gathering additional information on the Council's action and
24 placing the matter on a future PRC agenda, ensuring all relevant schematics and minutes are available to
25 Commissioners before the meeting. Ultimately, consensus emerged to seek clarification on Open
26 Meeting Law and Robert's Rules regarding discussion of public comments, and to revisit the Route 2
27 project at a future meeting with adequate notice to the public.

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30 Approval of Minutes

31 The draft minutes of August 28, 2025 were reviewed. J. Brabant and staff noted a duplicated section on
32 Conservation Easements (both heading and paragraph) that would be corrected. With that amendment,

1 J. Brabant moved to approve the minutes. B. Arrand seconded. The motion passed unanimously.
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4 **Letters of Compatibility**
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6 C. Meyer presented a review of the letters of compatibility process, explaining their use in grant
7 applications. Projects are often conceptual and submitted under tight deadlines, with staff historically
8 drafting letters based on the Regional Plan. Some letters are municipal (road reconstruction, restoration,
9 large residential) while others involve other entities (e.g., Downstreet Housing, Good Samaritan Haven
10 relocation). The interim Act 250 exemption areas established by the legislature were noted, extending
11 through December 31, 2026.

12 Commissioners discussed whether the PRC should formally review these letters. A. Peal strongly
13 supported PRC involvement, even at a high level, to ensure alignment with the Regional Plan and to flag
14 concerns early. She requested that letters explicitly state they were developed with both staff and PRC
15 review. She also emphasized the importance of reserving the right to comment more substantively as
16 projects progress. L. Cattaneo recommended establishing clear criteria, like Act 250 reviews, to
17 determine which letters rise to the level of PRC review. He suggested distinguishing between significant
18 new development versus other smaller projects.

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20 J. Brabant raised concerns about the addressee Gary Golka of Cabot lacking identification of his official
21 role. Staff agreed to confirm recipient roles and titles, including for Downstreet and other organizations,
22 and update addressees as appropriate. Commissioners generally agreed staff should continue
23 submitting letters to meet deadlines, while PRC and the full Board of Commissioners work together to
24 develop a standardized process for involvement and possible ratification. Staff will draft proposed
25 criteria and procedures and bring them to the Board of Commissioners for consideration before
26 returning to PRC.
27

28 **Act 250 & Section 248 Updates**
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30 S. Lash reported no new major applications but provided updates: the Berlin Solar Canopy project (ice
31 rink/town offices) had resubmitted, and CVRPC's prior letter of support was acknowledged. The
32 Middlesex tower co-location petition was still under review, with a staff letter supporting the use of
33 existing infrastructure already prepared. She also presented monthly tracking of smaller distributed
34 energy projects. July and August saw 230–240 kW of rooftop and backyard solar across about 20–27
35 projects in 10 towns. September was trending similarly. There is an expectation that this will fall off as
36 rebates and incentives expire. Staff is tracking trends and hopes to add mapping and utility territory
37 information. Commissioners noted the importance of monitoring smaller-scale projects, even if CVRPC
38 has no formal role, to understand regional patterns. J. Brabant commented on emerging micro-solar
39 technologies, and the discussion touched on "plug-in" balcony solar, regulatory changes, and the pause
40 in Solar for All funding. Staff confirmed developer responsibility for infrastructure upgrades remains the
41 norm in Vermont.

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43 **Next Meeting Topics**

44 Potential agenda items identified included:

- 45 • further discussion of the Route 2 / Country Club Road project,
- 46 • clarification of Roberts Rules/Open Meeting Law on public comment,
- 47 • continued review of letters of compatibility process,

1 • staff's tracking of distributed energy, and
2 • a presentation by S. Lash on grid resilience based on ongoing Public Utility Commission
3 proceedings.

4 Commissioners expressed strong interest in receiving updates on utility planning, beneficial
5 electrification, and the impacts of flooding on electric infrastructure.

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7 **Adjournment**

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9 J. Brabant moved to adjourn. B. Arrand seconded. The motion passed unanimously. The meeting was
10 adjourned at 5:58 p.m.

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12 Respectfully submitted by L. Banbury