

CENTRAL VERMONT REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION

Project Review Committee

August 4, 2025, 2:00 pm

Remote Participation via Zoom

Draft Minutes

Project Review Committee Members

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

1 Staff: Lorraine Banbury, Sam Lash, Christian Meyer

2

3 Public: None

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5 L. Cattaneo called the meeting to order at 2:13 pm.

6

7 **Public comment**

8 None

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10 **Adjustments to the Agenda**

11 L. Cattaneo added setting the date and agenda items for the next meeting to the end of the agenda for
12 today's meeting.

13

14 **Election of New Officers**

15 R. Wernecke nominated L. Cattaneo for chair. A. Peal seconded. There were no other nominations. L.
16 Cattaneo was elected unanimously. L. Cattaneo nominated R. Wernecke for Vice Chair. A. Peal
17 seconded. There were no other nominations. R. Wernecke was elected unanimously.

18

19 **Approval of Minutes**

20 R. Wernecke moved to approve the May 22, 2025, meeting's draft minutes. A. Peal seconded, all in
21 favor, motion carried.

22

23 There was discussion about whether to limit the agenda to the new Allen Street Battery Storage facility
24 Section 248 application, but as commissioners were prepared and had reviewed the packet, the
25 committee decided to cover the full agenda, including the revisions to the Rule of Process and
26 Guidelines for Review.

27

28 **Reporting to the Board of Commissioners**

29 L. Cattaneo raised the issue of how to keep the full commission informed about the work of the
30 committee. In the past, Will Pitkin had included updates in the meeting packets for the full board of
31 Commissioners. One option could be to have the Committee Chair report out at meetings. Another
32 would be to share the summary packet of cases that is prepared for each meeting with the full

1 Commission, but those packets are already quite dense. The desire was to highlight actions taken by the
2 Committee, so a summary of actions taken would be a good way to formalize that reporting to the full
3 Commission. Staff will begin preparing for that going forward.

4

5 **Project Review Guidelines and Rules of Process**

6 L. Cattaneo suggested the following edits to the documents in the meeting packet: in Appendix 2:
7 Project Review Guidelines, instead of listing the Substantial Regional Impact definition in the Additional
8 Considerations section in full and also in the definitions, write "Substantial Regional Impact - See
9 Definition 7" in the Additional Considerations section. The Rules of Process document needs to have
10 Appendix 1 added to the title. S. Lash noted that the link to the review checklist for Section 248 and 248
11 (a) cases was missing from the guidelines and needed to be added back in. With those edits, R.
12 Wernecke moved to recommend the amended Rule of Procedure with new Appendix 1: Rules of Process
13 and Appendix 2: Project Review Guidelines to the full Board of Commissioners for ratification. A. Peal
14 seconded, all in favor, motion carried.

15

16 **Allen Street Storage Project, Barre City**

17 S Lash reviewed a 4.99 MW storage facility pursuing a Certificate of Public Good and authority to own
18 and operate the project (memo was included in the packet). This project is within the project area of a
19 solar array (I Love Cows solar), which received a CPG last year and makes use of the same access road,
20 screen tress, etc. The memo did not include the same project siting and characteristics checklist again
21 (but can share it) and instead summarized the findings, which included no overlap with known
22 constraints, overlap with possible constraints of agricultural soils, which were already addressed in the
23 filing for the solar array. S. Lash noted that the project developers met with the Barre City Planning
24 Commission and Fire Department and summarized the impacts/benefits to the City. S. Lash noted that
25 Barre City wrote a letter of support for the project, although some of the items included were not clearly
26 included in the petition filing, including a training with the Barre City Fire Department staff provided by
27 Encore Renewable Energy, along with the battery manufacturer, for system fire prevention and
28 response before operation. S. Lash further noted there had been some discussion of back-up power
29 potentially being supplied locally to the City of Barre, which was not included either. S. Lash finally noted
30 that there were many components to this filling specific to the storage aspect of the project (fire safety,
31 public health, noise (acoustics), decommissioning, etc.) and noted an additional 2000+feet of
32 distribution line being upgraded as part of the project in addition to the composition components listed
33 in the memo.

34 R. Wernecke – moved that staff submit the comments as proposed to seek clarity on these project
35 aspects. B. Arrand seconded, all in favor, motion carried.

36

37 **Other 248/General Updates**

38 Staff anticipate seeing more 248 projects as people try to take advantage of federal credits while they
39 still exist. Utilities will be putting out RFPs for Tier II and Solar for All Projects (if funding remains for the
40 latter), it is timely if towns have particular sites in mind to host 500kW+ projects to let us know. There
41 was an interesting recent discussion with the Department of Taxation and some of our town's listers
42 (among others)- as the way utilities are taxed was updated- this drew some concern so S. Lash did take
43 an initial look at the outcome and would be happy to share with this committee if interested. Of note,
44 was that this also provided insight into how much municipal tax revenue some towns are receiving not
45 only from utilities but from distributed energy projects like those we discuss in project review- will share
46 at next meeting. S. Lash continues to participate in the PUC Grid Resilience Workshop.

1 **Update on Waitsfield-Fayston Substation**

2 A. Peal asked if there were any updates on the substation in Waitsfield-Fayston. S. Lash talked to the
3 regional wetlands specialist and the GMP engineer on the project- they confirmed they have been
4 diligently working together (for many years) and the project is proceeding. Once get notice to file will
5 review again. Staff will request whether the project can share the impact assessments when ready,
6 instead of waiting for the petition to be filed.

7 **Conservation Easements**

8 Looking for feedback: C. Meyer shared that CVRPC receives notifications periodically of conservation
9 easements. There's a ~500-acre easement in Kent's Corner/Robinson Cemetery in East Calais that is not
10 affecting a village center, but in the future, the easement could conceivably be proposed for land in a
11 preferred development area. One guideline could be to use Future Land Use Map designations for rural
12 areas (rural general, rural agricultural/forestry, or rural conservation), which do not require further
13 consideration. But if in one of the other areas: enterprise, transition, village center, town center, etc., it
14 could come to the committee for review. If something unique requires the Committee's attention, staff
15 could always bring those as well. The Committee cannot recall ever reviewing a conservation easement,
16 but it is conceivable that a conflict of uses could arise. A. Peal asked how the new Tier 3 overlay
17 identifying pinch points and critical forest blocks and if the Committee should weigh in on those
18 considerations? Those areas will likely be designated as rural conservation in the FLU Map. R. Wernecke
19 asked if the Committee should weigh in at all? Currently, the state is notifying CVPRC, likely due to
20 statute. Staff will draft language to amend the process on conservation easements that are contrary to
21 the regional plan and bring it back to the committee.

22 **Next Meeting Date and Agenda Items**

23 Currently, the Project Review Committee meetings are on an "as needed" basis. L. Cattaneo said that
24 having them as a standing meeting that is cancelled when not needed would make it easier to plan
25 around. A. Peal and R. Wernecke said this is how they currently treat the meetings. C. Meyer
26 determined that there may need to be a resolution change for this to take effect, which is something
27 staff will take care of. Going forward Project Review Committee will be a standing meeting on the 4th
28 Thursday of each month at 4:00. The next meeting will be Thursday, August 28.

29 R. Wernecke moved to adjourn, A. Peal seconded, all in favor, motion carried. Meeting adjourned at
30 2:56 pm.

31 *Respectfully submitted, L. Banbury*